

**CREATIVITY IN MUSIC EDUCATION WITH PARTICULAR  
REFERENCE TO THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS IN  
ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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## DECLARATION

Chapters 2 and 3 are an extended version of the paper “Developing a framework for the study of teachers’ views of creativity in music education”. This paper was originally presented at the 2nd International Conference for Research in Music Education (RIME), at the University of Exeter, and subsequently published in *Goldsmiths Journal of Education*, Vol. 4 (1), pp. 59-67.

Chapters 5 and 6 are a revised and extended version of the paper “The construction of creativity: using video to explore secondary school music teachers’ views”. It was first presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference 2001 and subsequently published in *Educate ~ The London Journal of Doctoral Research in Education*, Vol. 1 (1), pp. 104-122.

The second section of Chapter 12, entitled ‘Further methodological issues’, is a revision of the paper “Using videotaped extracts of lessons during interviews to facilitate the eliciting of teachers’ thinking”. This paper was originally presented at the European Educational Research Association Annual Conference 2002 and subsequently published in *Education-line*, available at:  
[www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002206.htm](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002206.htm)

## ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation into six teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education. Adopting a qualitative approach, videotaped extracts of teachers' lessons on composition and improvisation were used as a basis for discussion with them during in-depth interviews. Three research questions were examined focussing on (a) how participants characterised creativity in their discourse, (b) the differences of their perceptions compared with the literature and (c) the influence of their musical and professional experiences in their perceptions. The study is divided into four parts:

Part One is the theoretical orientation. The research questions are outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is devoted to an examination of the meanings attached to the word 'creativity', drawing on writings in the fields of psychology, education, philosophy, aesthetics and musicology. Different approaches taken by several studies on general creativity are examined and a four-fold framework for researching the teachers' perception of creativity in music education is put forward (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product). In Chapter 3 specific music education literature is reviewed. Chapter 4 includes an examination of previous research on teachers' perceptions of creativity.

Part Two focuses on the methodology. Chapter 5 is a review of the methodological assumptions underpinning the research with discussion of issues relating to ethics, data collection and analysis using the software programme NVivo. In Chapter 6 a pilot study with three teachers is described, explaining how this helped to refine the research methods used.

In Part Three the findings are examined. Twenty-eight categories and subcategories that complemented the original framework emerged from the analysis of the interviews. In Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 these categories are discussed with reference to the opening chapter's three research questions and the four-fold framework: the creative pupil, the appropriate environment for creativity, the creative process and its products. These teachers' perceptions indicate that there is frequently a substantial difference between their views and the recognised literature on various aspects of creativity. Findings also show that these teachers' comments on practical issues, such as the pupils' different learning styles and the problems related with under-resourced music departments, are to be rarely found in the music education literature. It is apparent that each teacher's musical background has a marked influence on his or her attitudes towards creativity in music education.

Part Four deals with the implications and conclusions. Chapter 11 focuses on the relationship between theory and practice, curriculum documentation and practice, and teacher education. In Chapter 12 the main findings are summarised together with further methodological issues and suggestions for future research.

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***PART ONE:***  
***THEORETICAL ORIENTATION***

# CHAPTER 1

AREA OF INQUIRY AND RESEARCH

QUESTIONS

## CHAPTER 1. AREA OF INQUIRY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 1.1 – Introduction

During the 1970s, the Schools Council, the Department of Education and Science and Local Education Authorities disseminated proposals in England for curriculum activities in which there was an emphasis on the idea of 'creativity'. One of the Schools Council's projects, *Arts and the Adolescent* (Schools Council Working Paper 54, 1975), developed a conceptual framework for the arts curriculum stressing the importance of the 'creative process' and the desirability to see creativity as of much more educational significance. Another Schools Council project, *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum*, was established in 1973 under the direction of Paynter. Paynter developed a philosophy focused on music as a class subject designed to promote imagination, inventiveness, sensitivity, music understanding and creativity. In discussing creativity and the music curriculum, he commented:

The concept of music as a creative art...is absolutely central to the Project's thinking. Yet in recent developments of school music there can be few things that have given rise to as much strong feeling and such widespread misunderstanding as the idea of 'creative' music-making. (Paynter, 1982: 93)

A review of these two projects reveals that creativity was referred to in two ways within the documents: one stating the value and desirability of creativity, and the other describing activities that were seen as fostering it. But there was little examination of creativity itself. It was never really clear what was meant and how creativity could be identified. The word was ambiguous. White (1968) pointed out that, because of this ambiguity, children could be involved in activities which were



not only 'non-educational' but even 'anti-educational', because such activities were mistakenly thought to promote creativity. Elliott (1971), in a famous article, identified two main concepts of creativity which he called the 'traditional' and the 'new'. The traditional was related to the myth of the creation and was firmly implanted in the uses of ordinary language. He noted that this concept did not allow creativity to be attributed to those who brought 'no new thing into being' (Elliott, 1971: 139). The traditional concept of creativity stressed the value of 'products'. In contrast, the new concept was related to the psychological notion of 'imaginative thinking'. According to this view, creativity is imagination successfully manifested in any valued pursuit; a thinking style demonstrated in actions.

In the field of music education there were frequent disagreements about the value and uses of creativity. In addition to the ambiguity surrounding its 'meaning' Plummeridge (1980: 34) identified two other causes of the debate: the 'context' of the proposals and the 'practice' or style of teaching. Disagreements arose over the broader conceptions of music education in which proposals appeared. Regarding the practice, there were problems involved in the style of teaching, the implementation of creative activities and the lack of information about how many of the proposals really worked in classroom. It was for these sorts of reasons that Paynter made the point referred to earlier.

## 1.2 - Current proposals for creativity

The debate surrounding creativity has been revived with the production of recent music curricula guidelines. The word ‘creativity’ is frequently used in policy documents, but its meaning is far from clear. Examples of this were the documents produced jointly by the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) (1999a, 1999b). It is argued in the *National Curriculum. Handbook for secondary teachers in England* (DFEE and QCA, 1999a: 172) that the teaching of music ‘increases self-discipline and creativity’ [emphasis mine]. Again, one of the strands of the Programmes of study is on ‘creating and developing musical ideas’ within all key stages:

### **Creating and developing musical ideas – composing skills** [Key stage 3]

Pupils should be taught how to:

- a improvise, exploring and developing musical ideas when performing
- b produce, develop and extend musical ideas, selecting and combining resources within musical structures and given genres, styles and traditions. [emphasis mine] (DFEE and QCA, 1999a: 172)

Furthermore, the booklet *Music. The National Curriculum for England* (DFEE and QCA, 1999b) states specific ways in which the teaching of music contributes to learning skills across the curriculum. It is argued that:

Music provides opportunities to promote:

- *thinking skills*, through analysis and evaluation of music, adopting and developing musical ideas and working creatively, reflectively and spontaneously. [emphasis mine] (DFEE and QCA, 1999b: 9)

Attainment targets are stated in the National Curriculum. An attainment target, as defined by the Education Act 1996 section 353a, sets out the 'knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each key stage'. Attainment targets contain eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, each level describing 'the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate' (DFEE and QCA, 1999b: 36). The latest version of the English National Curriculum includes the following statement in the attainment target for music at level 5 (Key stage 3, age 11-14):

Pupils...improvise melodic and rhythmic material within given structures, use a variety of notations and compose music for different occasions using appropriate musical devices such as melody, rhythms, chords and structures...They evaluate how venue, occasion and purpose affects the way music is created, performed and heard. [emphasis mine] (DFEE and QCA, 1999b: 37)

It is apparent from these quotations that creativity is referred to in two ways within the official documents: (a) describing activities under the label of creativity such as improvisation and composition (e.g. DFEE and QCA, 1999a: 172) and (b) stating the value of creativity as a desirable 'thinking style' (e.g. DFEE and QCA, 1999b: 9). But again, there is little examination of creativity itself. The assumption is that composition and improvisation are activities which require creativity. But the word creativity and how creativity can be identified is never explained.

### 1.3 - Current issues in creativity – meanings, interpretations, practices

Defining creativity may be a difficult task. Duffy (1998) suggests that definitions may:

- Limit creativity to the production of an artefact.
- See it simply as something which can be taught by means of instruction.
- View it as something that will develop if the conditions are right.
- Include stereotypical concepts, for example, that certain groups of people are naturally creative.
- Limit creativity to the gifted few. (Adapted from Duffy, 1998: 16-17)

Duffy stresses the necessity of developing a definition of creativity that is not elitist, recognising the ability of all children to be creative and making the most of the talents of all children. She claims that children need opportunities to play with ideas, and acknowledges the importance of an environment which encourages and values creativity. 'Creativity means connecting the previously unconnected in ways that are new and meaningful to the individual concerned' (Duffy, 1998: 18). The idea of creativity as a universal potential is supported in the report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education*, by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999) of the Department for Education and Employment. The proposals by the committee members are intended to show that creativity can be developed and how this might be done. It is stated that 'creativity is possible in all areas of human activity and that everyone has creative capacities' (NACCCE, 1999: 29).

These arguments were previously illustrated in the report *The Arts in Schools* (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1982). It was pointed out that creativity is not a special faculty with which some pupils are endowed and others are not, but is a form of intelligence and as such can be developed and trained like any other mode of thinking. Moreover, creativity is regarded as something which requires previous experience, discipline and a firm grounding in knowledge. The existence of two common misconceptions about creative work was noted in the same document. Firstly, the misconception that there is some separate mental faculty responsible for creative work, the absence or presence of which can be measured in an individual. Secondly, that some people have the capacity for creative thinking while others do not. A further insight into these issues advocates that there is not necessarily a connection between IQ and creativity. Jones (1984: 12) suggested that the attempts to correlate creative ability with intelligence as measured by IQ tests are 'strikingly inconclusive'.

Recent investigations on teachers' views of creativity point out differences in views between types of teachers (Fryer, 1989, 1996). In an enquiry on British teacher's perceptions of creativity, Fryer and Collings (1991a: 217) identify a relationship between certain views and the teaching style preferences of the respondents. They suggest that 'what best distinguishes teachers highly oriented to creativity from those much less oriented to it is a preference for a pupil-oriented approach to teaching' (Fryer and Collings define the teacher 'orientation' as 'a preference for dealing with, or involving oneself in, emotional, social or interpersonal issues', in this case education for creativity). Significant differences are also reported when teachers'

perceptions are analysed in relation to the subjects they teach. The study reveals that teachers of arts subjects interpret creativity and their teaching in personal terms:

Teachers of mathematics, science and technology were distinguished by a tendency to perceive creativity (and also their teaching) in largely impersonal, or 'objective', terms compared with teachers of....the creative arts and English – who typically interpreted creativity in more personal terms. (Fryer and Collings, 1991b: 79)

The authors of the study also point out a need for further investigation of the factors which are associated with variations in teachers' perceptions of creativity. This was the starting point for the present study, namely that there are different interpretations of creativity and different factors that affect the teachers' perceptions.

Notwithstanding the existence of centralised policies, there are still issues about creativity, since its meanings remain unclear and this leads to a variety of interpretations. Furthermore, there is no apparent agreement on teaching methods designed to promote creative activities. Odam (2000) has carried out a creativity study which seeks to identify a basis for effective composition practice in the classroom, by observing experienced teachers and their pupils in twenty-six state secondary schools across England. He concludes that group-work is the dominant working method in most schools. He also suggests that much time is wasted in group-work and this contributes to stress in both teachers and pupils. In his opinion too many music educators use methods inappropriate to their available resources. Composing is an individual activity, argues Odam, and this is not acknowledged in much current practice and curricular documentation.

## 1.4 - Research questions for investigation

Fryer and Collings (1991a) make the point that there are many different perceptions of creativity and that this can result in a variety of practices. This study is concerned with how music teachers in secondary schools interpret the meanings of creativity. In particular, it focuses on an understanding of how six teachers perceive creativity in music education through conversations based on their teaching. The methods employed are within the qualitative research paradigm and include the discussion with the teachers of their videotaped lessons (Appendix V), and an exploration of their musical background (Appendix VI). The study focuses on three main research questions.

The first question is concerned with these teachers' perceptions of creativity as they use the word in their discourse:

*A) What are these schoolteachers' perceptions of creativity?*

The second research question is an extension of the first. It is concerned with the relationship between what the teachers themselves say about creativity and what it is stated in the literature. An attempt is made to see the similarities and differences with both the literature in general and the literature in music education:

*B) What are the similarities and differences between the literature on creativity and these teachers' perceptions?*

As Fryer and Collings (1991b) point out, from the professional practice perspective one might hypothesise that teachers' perceptions of creativity are influenced by their

personal experiences, both as musicians and as teachers. This forms the basis of the third research question:

*C) In what ways do these teachers' musical and professional experiences influence their perceptions of creativity?*

The research questions are explored within the context of practice that features composition and improvisation. This study is not an attempt to formulate a theory of creativity or a theory of music education. The nature of this investigation is exploratory and illustrative. It attempts to illuminate practice through the teachers' explanations. It is in the tradition of teachers' talking, represented in the qualitative paradigm of educational research by writers such as Cox (1999a), Denicolo and Pope (1990), Eisner (1991), Goodson and Sikes (2001) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). The findings are considered within the current theoretical and practical contexts of music education.

## **1.5 – Summary**

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to outline the area of enquiry and to identify the specific research questions. During the 1970s the Schools Council and Local Education Authorities disseminated proposals for curriculum activities emphasising the idea of 'creativity'. But there were frequent disagreements amongst music educators about the granted value and uses of creativity, mainly caused by the ambiguities surrounding the meaning of the term and the discrepancies within proposed methods. The centralised production of music curricula during the 1990s (DEFF and QCA 1999a) has revived this debate. However, many issues surrounding



creativity and its interpretation remain unclear. Recent research on teachers' perceptions of creativity points out that teachers of arts subjects interpret creativity and their teaching in personal terms (Fryer and Collings, 1991b). The report also points to a need for further inquiry into the factors related to variations in teachers' perceptions of creativity. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to illustrate how music teachers in secondary schools interpret creativity. Teachers' views are explored and an attempt is made to show to what extent their perceptions are influenced by musical and professional experiences.

The following chapter outlines, in more detail, points arising from the several conceptualisations of creativity. Drawing on aesthetics, philosophy, psychology and education, different approaches to the study of creativity are examined and illustrated with examples of relevant investigations from various schools of thought. This analysis of literature provides a framework for the subsequent research into teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education.

# CHAPTER 2

## MEANINGS OF CREATIVITY

## **CHAPTER 2. MEANINGS OF CREATIVITY**

### **2.1 – Introduction**

Creativity is a complex and fairly vague term. In order to pursue creativity in music education it is necessary to look at the concept of creativity in itself. The very wide use of the word during the last fifty years in many fields of study - including philosophy, arts, psychology, education and science – arguably has led to confusion and an ultimate loss of its meaning. It has been suggested (Storr, 1972) that writing a broad review of the term has become a challenging task.

No single human being can possibly know enough to produce a comprehensive study of all that can be comprised under the heading creativity. (Storr, 1972: 11)

This chapter is devoted to an examination of some of the meanings attached to the word creativity. The literature survey is intended to illustrate particular areas and previous research relevant to this study. Drawing on aesthetics, philosophy, historical biography, psychology and education, conceptions of creativity are outlined in more detail. A review of the literature reveals that interest in creativity focuses on four distinct but closely related main themes:

- The notion of the creative person.
- The facilitating environment for creativity.
- The creative process.
- The creative product.

## 2.2 - Conceptions of creativity and education

It has already been noted that Elliott (1971) identified two 'versions' of creativity, which he called the 'traditional' and the 'new'. The 'traditional', which is implanted in the uses of our ordinary language, refers to those who bring new things into being and stresses the value of the products. In contrast, the 'new' concept is related to the psychological term 'imaginative thinking' and can be displayed in any pursuit. It is a thinking style manifested in actions.

The concept of creativity as traditionally applied to artistic works is linked with the myth of divine creation: 'The creator *par excellence* is God and whenever we create some new thing we feel we are God-like and achieving immortality' (Lytton, 1971: 1). This view may be due to the old relation between religion and art. Elliott describes the 'mythical archetype' as follows:

God freely brought into being, *ex nihilo* or from some pre-existent indefinite material, a concrete, infinitely rich, perfectly ordered and beautiful world, the most wonderful of all created objects save man himself. He made it for man ... to contemplate and . . . to praise his Maker. (Elliott, 1971: 142)

He maintains that our ordinary understanding of creativity is still dominated by this myth. Other authors (Bell, 1958; Tolstoy, 1930) have supported this understanding, seeing a link between art and religion. Elliott goes on to describe how this 'traditional' concept of creativity has been transformed in the past century by the influence of the philosophy of Nietzsche (1892). In his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche adapted the idea to man conceived as creator without rejecting the creation myth, but

placing the emphasis on self-creation. He saw the concept of God as obsolete and called upon man to assume the role of creator.

Thus Nietzsche retains the element of 'infinitude' in the idea of Creation, yet succeeds in adapting the idea to man conceived as creator. But the re-creation of man depends upon the re-creation of the individual self. (Elliott, 1971: 145)

In education, creativity is largely associated with progressivist and reconstructivist movements, where there is an emphasis on the interests of the child, democratic ways of behaving and problem-centred enquiry. Representative writers from the beginning of the twentieth century include Dewey (1916, 1938) and Kilpatrick (1929). The former defined education as 'growth', stressing the importance of active learning, and the latter supported group work of an interdisciplinary nature in the primary school. Skilbeck (1976) observed that modern progressivist ideology placed the school in a critical and creative role, viewing its curriculum as part of a strategy of social renewal. Well-known British independent schools associated with the aims of the progressive education movement include Dartington Hall and Summerhill (Neill, 1968, 1972). Razik (1967: 301) noted that in this educational scenario, the term 'creative' was often used to summarise the parents' and teachers' observations that children were naturally exploratory, curious and capable of fresh responses to their world. Progressive education was a widespread movement and the word creative was used for defining the qualities of children.

During World War II creativity was forgotten. After the war however, the fast development of science and industry emphasised the need for creative people, and the US Office of education along with several other institutions – e.g. Esalen Institute

on the Pacific Coast and the Creative Education Foundation in New York - produced programmes and materials for developing creative ability. Research in the field grew rapidly, especially after Guilford's Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association on 'Creativity' (Guilford, 1950). He pointed out that only 186 of 121,000 topics listed in Psychological Abstracts dealt with creative imagination. By 1965, 4176 references were listed in the comprehensive bibliography published by the Creative Education Foundation. Research programmes multiplied, especially under the headship of Barron at the University of California and Torrance at the University of Minnesota. The *Journal of Creative Behavior* was established in 1967 and a great deal of research has been carried out since then. Mednick (1962: 221) developed a theory of creativity, defining this concept as the association of elements into new combinations that 'either meet specified requirements or are in some way useful'. Contemporary writers such as Duffy (1998), and bodies like the Calouste Goulbenkian Foundation (1982) and the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999) seem to agree that creativity should be seen as a universal potential. This relates to the 'new' concept of creativity defined by Elliott as a thinking style manifested in actions:

According to this new concept, it is not necessary to make or create anything in order to be creative. Creativity is imaginativeness or ingenuity successfully manifested in any valued pursuit, and the paradigms of creativity are located not in art but in science and practical activity. (Elliott, 1971: 139-141)

Confusion arises, argues Elliott, when accounts of the new concept are presented as if they were characterisations of the traditional. The increased interest in creativity amongst members of the business, industrial and technological communities spread

to the social sciences and arts. However, this led to further misunderstanding in the uses and meanings of the term 'creativity'. As Hargreaves notes:

This rapid growth of research has not occurred in any organised or systematic way... [The] researchers' differing presuppositions about and definitions of creativity are not co-ordinated with one another. (Hargreaves, 1986: 143)

He goes on to claim that the word 'creativity' in Psychology is an 'umbrella' label encompassing different aspects of personality, ability, motivation and affect. In education, the interest in creativity has been strong in the perspective of informal and 'child-centred' teaching methods where the same term carries more different connotations.

Research into creativity, thus, follows several areas of enquiry. Jones (1984) and Reimer and Wright (1992) consider that research into creativity may be approached from three different perspectives, namely: the characteristics of creative **people**, the stages of the creative **process**, and creativity as manifested with **products**. Other authors (Beetlestone, 1998; Cropley, 1992; Craft, 1998 and Fryer, 1996) suggest a fourth area of study regarding the context for developing creativity, or the so-called '**environment**' as a facilitator of creativity.

In the following sections further consideration is given to these four lines of enquiry around the term 'creativity': the characteristics of creative persons, the environment for creativity, the process of creation and the creative product. In spite of Elliott's comments regarding the confusion over the meanings of creativity, the two concepts, traditional and new, continue to permeate thinking on the topic.

### **2.3 - The creative person**

Psychological studies approach creativity focusing on the individual. The main areas of research are personality characteristics and cognitive styles. The assumption here is that it is possible to identify a range of behaviours and attitudes that are indicative of a creative individual. Some researchers in this area study those human beings assumed to have creative ability in an attempt to identify particular personality traits.

Guilford (1950) saw originality as an important component in creativity. He defined it as the production of unusual or clever responses measured in terms of a culturally homogeneous population. This aspect is important in the creativity tests. Much research on the creative personality has seen creativity as a problem-solving operation: the ability to generate original responses to a problem or other stimulus is tested. Torrance (1967) gave value to originality with the specification that the response should be relevant to the task, showing intellectual strength or representing some breakaway from the obvious or the commonplace. Barron (1955) used a battery of tests to assess originality in a sample of a hundred air force captains from USA. He identified fifteen of them as being 'regularly original', placing his emphasis on originality within the sample population. In a study of American architects carried out by MacKinnon (1962) the characteristics of the 'creative architect' were described again as problem solving abilities.

Hargreaves (1986: 160) noted that research in this area has tended to view creativity as a normally distributed trait, which may manifest itself in different domains according to different individual interests. There have been attempts to correlate



creative ability with intelligence. Guilford (1967) based his theory of creativity on a taxonomy of factors of intelligence and suggested that the elements of fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, redefinition and sensitivity were critical to intelligence and creativity. These elements were perceived to provide valid measures of creative ability, which for him was an aspect of intelligence. He developed a three-dimensional model of the structure of intellect, containing 120 different cells representing 120 independent mental abilities, and carried out a research programme at the University of Southern California to validate his model. There are 24 cells in the model devoted to 'divergent production'. Divergent thinking, for Guilford, is the essence of creative behaviour. He measured these 24 cells with tests concerned with the production of large number of new ideas. For example the number of words beginning with 's' from a given starting-point, or the number of suggested titles for a short story. Guilford suggested that high achievers as defined in divergent thinking tests displayed the qualities of flexibility, originality and fluency characteristic of creative thinking.

Torrance (1975) developed his Test of Creative Thinking based on the model of Guilford. The test had an open-ended format providing the opportunity for the subject to express qualities of divergent thinking in verbal and non-verbal operations. He claimed that in individuals with an IQ score of more than 120, creativity is more important in predicting school achievement than any other factor. Hargreaves (1986) maintains, however, that there is a central problem when attempting to establish the criteria to predict musical creativity through divergent thinking tests, since the list of variables employed represent indirect rather than direct measures of musical creativity:

Presumably the only way that validity can be established with certainty is by employing a product-based approach... But the problems of establishing the reliability and validity of 'musical creativity tests' may unfortunately turn out to be overwhelming. (Hargreaves, 1986: 178)

Skills facilitating creativity have been outlined by Cropley (1992), drawing on the writings of Torrance and Hall (1980), Necka (1986) and Sternberg (1988), as follows:

*Sensitivity to Problems* – Creative thinkers show high levels of skill in pinpointing problems. They may see defects in proffered solutions and question the established wisdom in given textbooks.

*Redefinition of Problems* – Creative thinkers are frequently able to restate a problem in new terms which provide a fresh line of approach or new insights.

*Penetration* – Creative thinkers often display a knack for going straight to the heart of a problem, discarding or disregarding irrelevant details.

*Analysis and Synthesis* – Creative thinkers show high levels of ability both to break down a problem into its constituent parts and also to see connections between the elements of a problem and other areas of experience.

*Ideational Fluency* – Having pinpointed, analysed, and defined the problem, creative thinkers are particularly skilful at generating large numbers of relevant ideas. (Some writers argue that this property is the key intellectual ability involved in creativity.)

*Flexibility* – Creative thinkers show flexibility as well as fluency. This involves their ability to change their line of thinking and switch to a new approach.

*Originality* – Finally, creative thinkers show high levels of ability to generate novel and unusual ideas. (Cropley, 1992: 16)

Several writers have concentrated their attention on what constitutes a creative personality. Malcom Ross, in his book *The Creative Arts*, notes that 'what seems to distinguish the creative from the merely effective or competent individual is not so much special intellectual ability as certain traits of personality' (Ross, 1978: 3). The

picture of creative individuals, according to Jones (1984), shows them to be on the one hand, rebellious, irrational and disordered; and on the other hand open to experience, free from inhibitions, with cognitive flexibility and independence of judgement.

Cropley argues that apart from special cognitive processes, creative individuals display similar personal traits. More recent studies include those of Motamedi (1982), Runco (1989) and Treffinger, Isaksen and Firestein (1983). Descriptions of the creative personality reflect an impulsive, non-conformist and intelligent individual capable of sustained hard work, coupled with a desire to seek change and adventure. The creative thinker tends to avoid adherence to restrictive schedules and may show a certain disregard for observing details of plans and rules. A combination of these traits can lead to apparently disorganised behaviour.

#### **2.4 - Environment: the context for creativity**

While research into creativity during the 1950s and early 1960s was characterised by studies about the cognitive processes of creation and personality traits of creative people – following the path of Guilford (1950, 1967) and other psychologists – the environment necessary for developing creativity was considered more deeply during the later decades of the century. The psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1994), after spending twenty years studying the personality traits and cognitive processes of creative people, suggested that in order to understand creativity we should not focus exclusively on the individual and the process of creation, but consider the context in

which the individual operates. He relates, in a frank statement, how he came to his conclusion:

The more I tried to say that “creative people are such and such” or “creative people do this and that”, the less sure I became about what creativity itself consisted of and how we could even begin to figure out what it was. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994: 135)

Several writers have suggested an ideal environment in which to develop creativity. Some educators have given descriptions of the appropriate classroom ethos or climate for the development of creativity. Beetlestone (1998) describes three aspects that form the classroom climate, namely the physical climate, the intellectual climate and the emotional climate. Some of her advice in order to enhance pupils' originality – which she sees as the main aspect of creativity – is with reference to the layout of the room for a range of activities. Resources would need to be available to support problem solving, group work, imaginative play and aesthetic appreciation. Pupils would need to be encouraged to use the resources without fixed boundaries. Concerning the intellectual climate, Beetlestone states that children need to be challenged in order to stimulate their abilities, but the capabilities of the pupils must be taken into account. With regard to the last feature of the classroom climate, the emotional aspect, students need to feel safe to take risks and to experiment without frequent fear of failure, and effort must be rewarded. She considers the whole classroom as a resource for learning. However, in creating the right climate or ‘setting the stage’ she gives a key role to educators themselves. Creativity should start with the teacher and not with the classroom setting. Teaching that encourages children to be creative may flourish whatever the educational climate.

Craft (1997) supports this view and says that educators, being at the centre of the creative process, are the ones who fully develop students' learning experiences. Moreover, Craft points out again the importance of encouraging pupils' experimentation, openness and risk-taking, allowing students to make mistakes. She notes, however, that giving children space is not to say that structure is unimportant. In research about students' attitudes towards being in creative environments, Jeffrey and Woods (1997: 31) outline four aspects of the classroom experience that pupils they interviewed appreciated from their teachers. These four aspects were the teachers' efforts to respond to children's feelings (e.g. helping children to feel confident), the teachers' efforts to engage the children's interest (including having a sense of humour and imaginative ideas), maintaining the children's autonomy (e.g. giving space to them to develop their own ideas) and encouraging children's capacity to critically reflect on their ideas.

Cropley (1992) analyses the role of the teacher in fostering creativity in similar terms. Drawing on an earlier study by McLeod and Cropley (1989), he notes the characteristics of creative teachers and the role of the teacher in establishing a creative classroom atmosphere. He suggests that the educator's role is to overcome stumbling blocks to the emergence of divergent thinking, which he sees as the main aspect of creativity. In doing this, teachers need to eliminate negative attitudes towards divergence, prevent contempt from peers and reduce anxiety about correctness or incorrectness. At the same time, he suggests that the provision of positive factors is required to establish a favourable climate for creativity, openness to new ideas and sensitivity to one's own feelings.

Fryer (1996) identifies, in a comprehensive study of British teachers' attitudes on creativity, features of school life which teachers think most hinder the development of their students' creativity. Educators are concerned about their constrained environment, assessment by examination, peer group pressure and encouragement of quick work. Several teachers that were interviewed referred to environmental factors that they thought may inhibit the development of creativity. These included poor physical environment, lack of resources, time constraints, obsession with tidiness on the part of the school authorities, unnecessary rules and too much television or video viewing out of school (Fryer, 1996: 115).

## **2.5 - The creative process**

Those writers who have studied the nature of the creative process assume that it is possible to identify the act of creation. Koestler (1964) and Gagne (1986) share the view that creativity involves the capacity to have new ideas and the ability to solve problems. Koestler (1964) claims that solving a problem means bridging a gap. He conceives the mind as a pyramid in which skills and habits at various levels and distances from one another can suddenly come into contact. This is what he calls 'bisociative' thinking.

Hargreaves (1986:147) identifies two opposing views of the creative process: 'perspiration' and 'inspiration'. The 'perspiration' view involves a good deal of hard work and persistence, and creativity is seen as an everyday affair. Creative work is rational and somehow ordinary. For example, many professional writers timetable their work in a daily routine. This is in opposition to the romantic view of

'inspiration' characterised by irrationality, mystery and unconsciousness. A good example of this view is Mozart's explanation of his own composing:

When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer – say, travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them... my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodised and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue, at a glance. Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts successively, but I hear them, as it were all at once . . . All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a pleasing lively dream. What has been thus produced I do not easily forget, and this is perhaps the best gift I have my Divine Maker to thank for. (Mozart, 1789)

During the last century certain psychologists studied the creative process. Freud and the **Psychoanalysts** claimed that production of works of art provided individuals with a way of freeing repressed instincts and desires. Jung (1968) suggested that art was an extension of dream formation. The images aroused by the artistic creation were seen as archetypal symbols. Jung suggested that human beings had a collective unconscious including the accumulated experience of the species. Works of art and dreams, as well as folk rites, legends and myths were formulations of the inner states that reflected the experience of the species. Thanks to this collective unconscious, individuals could respond to works of art.

The **Associative** theorists suggested that the formation of associations was an integral part of creative thinking. Their emphasis was mainly on the process of producing associations. Mednick (1962) devised the *Remote Associates Test* (RAT) where subjects were presented with sets of three words and asked to provide a link

between them. But Wallach and Kogan (1965) pointed out that Mednick was in the rather unrealistic position of knowing a supposedly 'creative' answer before it was given. Koestler's (1964) explanation of the creative process in terms of 'bisociations' is closely related to the associative theories. **Cognitive** theorists, including the Gestalt psychologists, explained that the restructuring of elements in their perceptual fields could produce a sudden 'insight'. Wertheimer (1945) argued that productive thinking, which formed the basis of the creations of scientists, was a continuous process well used by children attempting to solve simple geometric problems.

Some researchers have tried to describe the creative process through examining the stages in which the individual is involved throughout. Taylor (1959) pointed out how important it is for creative people to understand their own creative process. A widely accepted theory by Wallas (1926) illustrated four different stages in the formation of a new individual's thought:

*Preparation* – the stage during which the problem is investigated in all directions;  
*Incubation* – the stage during which he is not consciously thinking about the problem;  
*Illumination* – the appearance of the 'happy idea' together with the psychological events which immediately precede and accompanies that appearance;  
*Verification* – closely resembles the first stage, it is fully conscious and men have worked out much the same series of logical rules for controlling verification by conscious effort as those which are used in the control of preparation. (Wallas, 1926: 79-96)

Mackinnon (1963) described five stages:

- (1) Separation – period during which one acquires the skills and techniques and the elements of experience which make it possible for one to pose a problem to oneself;



- (2) Concentration – period of concentrated effort to solve the problem, which may be suddenly solved without delay or difficulty, but which perhaps more often involves so much frustration and tension and discomfort that out of sheer self-preservation one is led to;
- (3) Withdrawal – period of psychological going out of the field, of renunciation of the problem or recession from it;
- (4) Insight – accompanied by exhilaration, glow and elation of the ‘ah ah’ experience
- (5) Verification – period of evaluation and elaboration of the insights one has experienced. (Mackinnon, 1963: 166-174)

Following the same linear model, Rossman (1931) characterised the creative process with seven stages:

- (1) Observation of a need or difficulty
- (2) Analysis of the need
- (3) Survey of all available information
- (4) Formulation of objective solutions
- (5) Critical analysis of the solutions for their advantages and disadvantages
- (6) The birth of the new idea – the invention
- (7) Experimentation to test out the most promising solution, and the selection and perfection of the final embodiment by some or all of the previous steps. (Rossman, 1931: 57)

Stein (1962) reduced the process to three stages: the hypothesis formation, the hypothesis testing and the communication of the results. However, it is not difficult to see similarities between the writers, following the earlier pattern of Wallas. Part of Stein’s first stage, the first two stages of MacKinnon and the first three of Rossman’s could be placed within Wallas’ *Preparation* first stage. His *Incubation* would include MacKinnon’s period of withdrawal. The *Illumination* stage is named by Rossman as the ‘birth of the new invention’ and ‘period of insight’ by MacKinnon. Finally, Stein’s stage two, Rossman’s stage seven and MacKinnon stage five, all illustrate

Wallas' *Verification* stage. Figure 2.1 outlines a comparative picture of the stages of the creative process.

*Figure 2.1 – Comparison of stages of the creative process*

Wallas (1926)	Rossmann (1931)	Stein (1962)	Mackinnon (1963)
1 <i>Preparation</i>	(1) Observation of a need or difficulty  (2) Analysis of the need  (3) Survey of all available information	(1) Hypothesis formation	(1) Separation  (2) Concentration
2 <i>Incubation</i>	(4) Formulation of objective solutions  (5) Critical analysis of the solutions		(3) Withdrawal
3 <i>Illumination</i>	(6) The birth of the new idea		(4) Insight
4 <i>Verification</i>	(7) Experimentation	(2) Hypothesis testing  (3) Communication of results	(5) Verification

## 2.6 - The creative product

There are writers who seek to identify creativity in terms of qualities or characteristics of the product. Jones (1984) suggests that scholars who follow this approach have the main aim of recognising aesthetic value in a product, that is thought to indicate creativity. If a product can be shown to have certain qualities then its maker can be regarded as being creative.

Child (1967) argued for the existence of an objective aesthetic value. He observed that aesthetic value is objective because it is drawn from agreement among individuals. However, Hamlyn (1972) suggested that the concept of objectivity being understood as irrefutable truth or validity is problematic. Objectivity, he pointed out, should not be equated with truth because it indicates a certain approach to the truth but not the truth itself. Jones, in a controversial statement, argues that research based on the belief that agreement among experts forms the basis for objectifying aesthetic appreciation is 'resting on shaky foundations' (Jones, 1984: 7). He claims that no evidence is provided by 'product' research to sustain the assumption that creativity can be identified from an analysis of a work of art. Passionately, he blames the academic world for such an assumption:

It seems that the academic traditions of universities, concentrating as they do on appreciation rather than creation, on analysis, categorization and periodization, engender a belief that analytical activity of itself can establish a hierarchy of values. The basis of these value judgements are rarely challenged by those outside the university walls. Indeed, artists themselves often collude in this process by seeking the critical acclaim of these analysts. (Jones, 1984: 8)

In contrast, White (1968) argues that there must be some criteria for making judgements of aesthetic value. 'The difficulty of spelling out these criteria in words should not be taken to show that such criteria do not exist. If we are to talk in aesthetic terms at all, they must exist' (White, 1968: 133). It might be seen that aesthetic value is measured by agreement among individuals, no matter when or where the recognition of value is done. In other words, when assessing products, there is some process of recognition of merit by agreement between individuals.

Other authors in the field have tended to avoid getting into argument over this matter. Vernon (1970) excludes any discussion of what constitutes a great scientific invention or work of art. He argues that 'these are matters of aesthetic criticism, or of theoretical or technological evaluation' (Vernon, 1970: 9). Nevertheless, he accepts the value of the products, characterising some individuals with the term 'creative' because their work is generally acknowledged as creative or of particular value. Vernon's collection of articles contains pioneering empirical studies on 'geniuses', letters and introspective materials by artists, and several contributions concerning psychometric approaches to creativity, studies of personality and the stimulation of creativity. It deals with the distinction of personal characteristics and abilities of individuals whose work is generally recognised as original or creative, but avoids discussing what constitutes a great work of art.

Some researchers claim that products cannot be analysed because doing so will destroy the mystery of artistic creation. This is related, again, to the myth of divine creation and the traditional concept of creativity. MacLeod states:

The psychologist who insists that creativity can be studied scientifically must bear the burden of proof in the face of centuries of testimony from mystics and artists, and even from ordinary people, who claim that at least in his moments of inspiration man is not subject to the laws of nature. (MacLeod, 1963: 178)

Briskman (1981) examines the concept of creativity in science and art and suggests that the creative artist or scientist simply does not produce a transcendent product. In a sense they transcend themselves by producing something they could not have willed, that they could not know they had the ability to produce. He characterises the creative product like a 'solution' to a problem. This definition is more easily exemplified with a scientific discovery. It could be argued nevertheless, that the problem solved by the artist is one of artistic fulfilment, giving response to a personal challenge:

First, relative to the background of prior products, it is a *novel* product. Second, it puts this novelty to a desirable purpose by *solving a problem*, such problems being themselves relative to this background and emerging from it. Third, it does so in such a way as to actually *conflict* with parts of this background, to necessitate its partial modification, and to supplant and improve upon parts of it. Finally, this novel, conflicting, problem-solution must be favourably evaluated; it must meet certain exacting standards which are themselves part of the background it partially supplants. (Briskman, 1981: 144)

To some extent Briskman's view brings together the traditional and the new versions of creativity. However, if the new version of creativity as imagination successfully manifested in any valued pursuit (Elliott, 1971) is accepted, then it might be said that anybody can be creative. This would appear to refute the objective view of aesthetic value. As mentioned previously, confusion arises when accounts of the new concept are presented as if they were characterisations of the traditional.

## 2.7 - Summary and conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine some of the meanings attached to the word creativity in four broad research areas. Psychological studies (Crompton, 1992) focus on personality characteristics and cognitive styles, with the assumption that it is possible to identify a range of behaviours and attitudes that are indicative of 'creative individuals'. They are described as capable of sustaining hard work, seeking adventure, impulsive and inclined to avoid restrictive schedules. This issue is examined further in the second section of Chapter 4, 'Teachers' perceptions of creative pupils'.

While research into creativity during the 1950s and 1960s was characterised by research on personality traits, the environment for creativity was considered more deeply during the later decades of the century. Educators including Beetstone (1998), Craft (1997) and Fryer (1996) have given descriptions of the classroom ethos or climate for the development of creativity.

Some writers (e.g. Wallas, 1926 and Mackinnon, 1963) have studied the nature of the creative process, identifying different stages in which the individual is involved throughout. Figure 2.1 (page 38) shows a comparative picture of these stages. They were described in section 5, alongside other explanations of the creative process including Psychoanalysis, Associative and Cognitive theories.

There are other writers who seek to identify creativity in terms of the characteristics of the product, with the main aim of recognising aesthetic qualities which are thought

to indicate creativity. However philosophers and aestheticians point out the difficulties in defining 'objectivity'. It is suggested that those involved in the evaluation of creative products have to define the criteria they are using.

The intention in this chapter has been to present previous research in order to demonstrate various approaches followed in the study of creativity. Clearly, there has been a marked shift of meaning from the 'traditional' to the 'new' concept as defined by Elliott (1971). Within this latter concept, creativity is imaginative thinking or the process of having novel ideas and making something of them. Many contemporary educators seem to agree that creativity should be seen as a universal potential. This is the view to be found in the report of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999).

The next chapter focuses on the notion of creativity in music education, with particular reference to historical approaches to music education and contemporary developments.

# CHAPTER 3

## THE NOTION OF CREATIVITY IN MUSIC EDUCATION



## CHAPTER 3. THE NOTION OF CREATIVITY IN MUSIC EDUCATION

### 3.1 – Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the way creativity is interpreted in the literature on music education. At this point, it is necessary to observe that the aim of this enquiry is not to define ‘creativity’ per se, but rather to elucidate what teachers think about creativity. However, prior to observing teachers and seeking their views, it is necessary to review the literature, documentation and projects that have been influential in the music education arena for the last 50 years.

As explained in the last chapter there are many ways of looking at creativity. In music, the terms ‘improvisation’ and ‘composition’ are considered under the umbrella of creative activities (Murphy, 1968; Kratus 1990; DFEE and QCA 1999a, 1999b). A good example of this is exemplified in the latest version of the English National Curriculum:

**Creating and developing musical ideas – composing skills** [Key stage 3]

Pupils should be taught how to:

- a improvise, exploring and developing musical ideas when performing
  - b produce, develop and extend musical ideas, selecting and combining resources within musical structures and given genres, styles and traditions. [emphasis mine]
- (DFEE and QCA, 1999a: 172)

Perhaps understandably, given its contested nature some contemporary writers avoid the utilisation of the term creativity, and focus on composition and improvisation without referring to them exclusively as creative activities (e.g. Swanwick, 1999).

In order to illustrate the roots of current proposals on creativity including improvisation and composition, some Western theories of music education are briefly analysed in the next section, before going over proposals on creativity in English music education from 1950 onwards.

### **3.2 – Historical approaches to music education and creativity**

Current proposals for creative activities in music education do not exist in a vacuum. Music educators throughout history have stressed the importance of encouraging children to improvise and compose music. Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, Yorke Trotter and Curwen all stress certain kinds of creative activity.

In the educational approach developed by Dalcroze (1865-1950), improvisation had a very important function, namely to awaken the tactile consciousness. It was concerned with the student's own discovery of solutions to musical problems. Dalcroze teachers were expected to use the piano to individualise student needs, often shifting styles, rhythms, and tempos to match the movement of their students. When students had been systematically exposed to many musical ideas and had explored a range of expressive movement possibilities, they were encouraged to express themselves on the piano and other classroom instruments. Melodic and rhythmic fragments that they had discovered became the basis for students' expanded instrumental improvisation. Vocal improvisation was also advocated, after a sufficient foundation in sight-singing and ear-training had been laid. Dalcroze views on the encouragement of pupil's self-expression are best explained in his own words:

I consider unpardonable that in teaching the piano the whole attention should be given to the imitative faculties, and that the pupil should have no opportunity whatever of expressing his own musical impressions. (Dalcroze, 1912: 30)

Dalcroze's methodology might be seen as an innovative approach to musical development through movement, stressing the pupil's creative work by means of dance rather than instrumental self-expression. Nevertheless, he observed certain educational principles that would emerge again in the 1960s within the progressive education movement. Two of these principles were pointed out by Dobbs (1991: v), President of the Dalcroze Society in UK. The first, that the 'rules' should be introduced to children only after the facts which give rise to them have been experienced. In other words, in the education of children, theory should always follow practice. This principle, although methodological, gained prominence along with ideas on 'individual discovery' and 'creative work', during the rise of the progressive education movement. The second, that pupils should be creators themselves as well as respondents to the creation of others. An example of the variety of work produced by Dalcroze's teaching is illustrated with two pupils undertaking the same piece at the former Dalcroze College in Hellerau. Sadler (1912, in Dalcroze, 1912: 62-63) relates that 'hardly a movement of the two interpretations was the same... In such widely different ways did the same piece of music speak to the individuals'.

From Orff's perspective, music is inseparable from speech and movement. Children discover musical concepts through speech-rhythms, songs and structured and spontaneous movement. From 1926, Orff (1895-1982) was closely associated with children through his work with the 'Guenterschule', a school for gymnastics, dance

and music in Munich. The experience of these years, along with material from a series of Radio broadcasts, were condensed into five books known as *Schulwerk*, or *Music for Children* in the English adaptation. Orff felt that, in many cases, music was approached as an intellectual process and that youngsters were trained with technical matters (the staff, the treble clef, the mathematical division of bars), neglecting pupils musical self-expression: educationally speaking, putting the cart before the horse. He argued for a method that would require children to play the central role in the creation of ensemble music, performing and improvising before introducing printed notation. Campbell (1991) gives a good account of the functions of improvisation within the Orff method:

The ultimate aim of the Orff process is to develop creative musicianship as displayed in the ability to improvise....Children [are encouraged] to explore space through movement, and sounds through their voices, body sounds, and instruments. (Campbell, 1991: 219-220)

The central principle of Orff's *Schulwerk* is continuous inventing. The essence of his method is based initially upon the imitation of models. Imitation is the beginning of improvisation. His methodology does not involve the study of songs with ready-made accompaniments, but rather a continuous exploration of individual variations, a spontaneous act of 'discovery with a hundred ways and a thousand possible structures' (Thomas, 1970, in Keetman, 1970: 13). To encourage and facilitate this exploration, Orff drew on Polynesian native instruments to design a range of instruments adapted to the physical requirements of firstly young adults, then children. This set of instruments has been carefully described by Hall (1960). Mallet-played instruments were used (glockenspiel, metalophone, xylophone) along with percussion (triangle, jingles, cymbals, wood blocks, tambourine, timpani, etc) and a

deep-toned string instrument to give body and support to the ensemble. The recorder was also used, sometimes as a solo instrument. Body movements, including clapping, stamping and finger snapping, were to be utilised to accentuate rhythmic perception. Orff's method is seen to exploit the natural rhythm of words, incorporating speech, rhythm and movement as the basis of developing rhythmic independence. Through a variety of exercises such as echo clapping, rhythmic phrase building, rhythmic rondo, echo playing and melodic rondo, the pupils were prepared for rhythmic and melodic invention. In melodic rondo exercises, the whole group would be expected to perform the 'A' section and the individual would then improvise the episode. As described in the *Teacher's Manual* (Hall, 1960: 24), these exercises 'should lead to the goal of rhythmic and melodic improvisation'.

The methodology explicated from the work of Kodaly (1882-1967) also advocated a sort of improvisation. In this methodology, improvisation was regarded as being dependent on aural learning and it was preceded by extensive note-reading exercises. Kodaly (1960, 1974) studied Hungarian folk music before developing material for children. He drew on rhythms and modal scales found in folk music, using them both to develop children's musical skills, and to build a repertoire of songs and exercises of increasing difficulty. Once children had sung songs, clapped rhythms and participated in folk dances, they were ready for exploratory experiences at every level. For example, students were to be taught to respond to rhythmic phrases with their own improvised phrases and question-and-answer games would be designed to allow students to express their own melodic ideas.



Nevertheless, the main concern of Kodaly was to increase the children's musical literacy rather than their creativity. His 'method' stresses the importance of musical notation and the development of musical literacy through *sol-fa* training. Creative work, by means of improvisation, was to be preceded by extensive note-reading exercises, a rather different approach from that illustrated by Orff. Kodaly's conception of music education has since transcended geographical boundaries and some of the techniques have been used in countries outside Hungary. As Paynter (1982: 12) points out, Kodaly and Orff have influenced music education in Britain and America, both indirectly – through schemes that imitate and adapt the originals – and directly, by the translations of their books.

Proposals for creative activities originated long before such approaches. For example, the encouragement of children to compose music, as well as perform it and listen to it, is associated in many people's minds with Orff, whose work has been increasingly known since the late 1950s. But Yorke Trotter (1854-1934) claimed the same in the early years of the past century. In his *Principles of Musicianship*, he notes the existence of two main factors, reception and creation, that work together in musical education:

There are two main factors in [music] education – reception and creation. The pupil must receive instruction which he can use in his own way. On the other hand, he must not only receive; he must be **encouraged to create** as soon as he has sufficient material to work on. [emphasis mine] (Yorke Trotter and Chapple, 1933: 2)

To meet the requests of these two factors - reception and creation – Yorke Trotter divided all the lessons of his method in two sections: Section A and B. The former showed how information should be presented, and the later explained the foundations

for creative work. He observed that both sections should go hand in hand, while the teacher was meant to emphasise one or the other as needed. He put the sound before the symbol, one of his principles being that pupils should be able to understand before they are able to write or read music notation. The main aim of the teacher was to develop the innate feeling for music in the child. Yorke Trotter noted that making the pupils do things for themselves might be the best way to produce this. In addition to the sections of his lessons devoted to students' creative work, a chapter of his *Principles of Musicianship* is committed exclusively to extemporisation. In this chapter he argues that extemporisation 'should be one of the most important phases' of music education because 'it is the spontaneous expression of our nature, using an instrument as our medium of expression' (Yorke Trotter and Chapple, 1933: 77). Here extemporisation is understood as a trainable ability and, in Yorke Trotter's words, 'the prevailing idea that extemporisation can only be a gift is entirely erroneous'. In *Music and Mind* (Yorke Trotter, 1924), a philosophical book on the nature of the mind and its relationship to music, he states that an instinct for composition needs to be and should be fostered. The assumption being that the creative instinct is universal and can be strengthened by use, or weakened by neglect:

The wish and the power to create come by the act of creating. The intuition that gives birth to compositions of moving quality must be fostered, or it will tend to disappear....Original work...springs from intuition, but only appears after certain preparations. (Yorke Trotter, 1924: 41)

Pitts (1998: 26) has suggested that Yorke Trotter's ideas prefigured 'many of the pupil-centred theories that were to take another sixty years to be revised and accepted'. Yorke Trotter asserted that the most natural way for music education to begin, was with the engagement of emotions. The intellectual part of music

education had to be ‘built up after the feeling for music’ had been established (Yorke Trotter, 1914: 11). His belief that the experience of sound should precede the study of notation was later revived in the 1970s, when classroom composition proliferated as a logical extension of children’s exploration of sound. This issue is considered further in the following section.

In a further exploration of the origins of proposals for creative work in music education, one resource of the Kodaly method is the possibility of direct creative work in melodic extemporisation. By singing phrases to *sol-fa* (a method developed originally by Curwen) pupils are expected to exercise and develop their inventions, either spontaneously or in response to given phrases. It should be noted that Curwen (1816-1880), in addition to extending the use of the sol-fa exercises, developed a teaching methodology that was advanced in contemporary 1840’s educational thinking. His methods shared some of the principles of the progressive education movement of the twentieth century, namely discovery strategies and use of meaningful activities for children. He stressed the importance of concepts before symbols and sounds before signs. These ideas lie behind his approach to teaching music, explained in *The art of teaching and the teaching of music* (Curwen, 1875). Simpson (1976: 30) pointed out that Curwen would lead children to notice and discover for themselves rather than feed them with information, stressing that whatever was learnt should be ‘applied in pleasurable situations and activities’.

Many of these principles can be traced back to Rousseau (1762), when in Part 2 of his book, he tells how *Emile* should experience music. The pupil, notes Rousseau, should learn to read music, but should not be hurried into this, because a song reveals



itself more easily to the ear than to the eye. The students should also make up songs themselves, for this gives them a real knowledge of music. Simpson (1976: 16) observed that three of Rousseau's propositions, advanced two hundred years ago, now commanded wide acceptance in the practice of the 1970s. First, was the need for an adequate background of musical experience before reading is attempted. Secondly, was the value of composition by pupils. And thirdly, was the stress that the most important thing of all is to make music enjoyable. Rousseau's encouragement of pupils' creative work through composition is a clear anticipation of the work of Yorke Trotter and Orff.

### **3.3 - Proposals for creative activities in music education in England from 1950 onwards**

In recent years there have been many English publications and proposals concerned with creativity and creative activities in music education. The main aim of this section is to trace proposals for creative activities from 1950 onwards, suggesting connections with historic music education methods. It has been observed by Cox (1999b) that to understand the history of music education, it is necessary to unravel the complexities and constraints of curriculum reform. For this purpose, the data from music associations and curriculum development projects can be particularly helpful because they provide evidence of change, continuity and conflicting interests. Such work enables the researcher to interpret the present 'not as an inevitable outcome of the past, but as a heavily contested one' (Cox, 1999b: 457). In order to reflect on the 1960s and 70s debate on 'creative work', special attention is given to the rise and fall of progressive ideology and child-centred education. Further changes

developed during the later 1980s and 90s in music policy, are also reviewed. Consequently, several sources are considered including professional music association bulletins, journals, articles and official documents, attempting to illuminate the origins of the actual concern for creativity in music education.

In analysing school practice in music education, both Cox (1993, 1998) and Pitts (1998) observe that a main change in the post-war years has been from music-making based on large group or class performance, to more attention being given to individual invention. The publications from the Board of Education (1933) and Smith (1950) illustrate these developments. The earlier report *Recent developments in school music* (Board of Education, 1933), characterised the progress in the school music setting very optimistically, documenting performance activities such as community singing, pipe playing, country dancing, concerts, festivals and the school orchestra. In contrast, Smith (1950: 166) observed the need for guidance for teachers to move away from this 'interpretative approach' and to adopt more creative activities, pointing out that nothing valuable for them had been printed since the 1937 *Handbook of suggestions for teachers* (Board of Education, 1937).

In a detailed paper on post-war primary music education, Cox (1998) traces the history of Musical Education of the Under-Twelves (MEUT) Association from its birth in 1949 to its demise in 1983. He explores the relations between teachers and educational progressivism and between child-centredness and the methods of Kodaly and Orff, examining the rise of the progressive ideal and musical creativity. Although the MEUT Association did not pursue 'progressive ideals in a monolithic way' (Cox, 1998: 249), its activities reflected the educational debate of its time.

Originally the members of MEUT association were mainly lecturers in music from Teacher Training Colleges. The association had an advisory council, supported at the inaugural meeting on February 1949, by the following societies and institutions: the University of London Institute of Education, the Nursery School Association, the National Froebel Foundation, the Percussion Band Association, the Pipers' Guild, The Dalcroze Society and the Bow-Craft Guild. Cox (1998) observes that this widespread support might explain the popularisation of 'new' ideas in teaching after World War II. Throughout the following decades, the majority of the representative writers on creativity in music education were involved with MEUT - lecturing, giving demonstrations or writing articles. There was an alignment with progressive educational ideas, probably because of the fact that the majority of the executive committee members were working in teacher training colleges, one of the agents of progressivism. This 'progressivism' has been characterised by Cunningham (1988) as the tendency towards the dissolution of the formal timetable and the reduction of authoritarianism, together with the increase of alternatives to class lessons and a shift from the 3 R's (reading, writing and arithmetic), to more expressive and creative activities. In the opening conference of the MEUT Association in 1949, the speaker was the Director of the National Froebel Foundation. Her speech provided a clear identification with progressive ideas:

If a great deal of music-making materials were distributed, children would create their own tunes and rhythms....Once they had gained the habit of making pleasant noises and pleasant rhythms...they would soon want to write them down.  
(Lawrence, 1949, summarised in Cox, 1998: 245)

Other members emphasised children's spontaneity and focused on the child's own knowledge, present experience and individual needs. Brearley, one-time Principal of

the Froebel Institute and a member of the Plowden Committee, outlined the importance of the pupil's present experience. Dobbs furthered all these ideas in relation to music teaching in his lecture when taking the presidential post. The important point for Dobbs was to focus upon the interplay of pupils in small groups:

In such settings children mature emotionally and socially. Music is an activity which lends itself to sharing, between children and the teacher, and the teacher and her class. No longer is the teacher the hander out of information...or a director of performances. She is a person skilled in the art of creating situations in which the child will want to learn for himself. (Dobbs, 1966, summarised in Cox, 1998: 246)

In many ways this was a key speech foreshadowing a new era: it was in tune with the soon-to-be published Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education [CACE], 1967). An earlier editorial of the *Bulletin* (MEUT, June 1954) had stated that 'education should be thought of in terms of experience, experiment and activity in constantly changing groups. The classroom should become a music workshop'. Outside the MEUT Association, Thackray published *Creative Music in Education* (1965), a justification for creative activities in the schools. The book included sections on vocal improvisation, instrumental improvisation, and composition, and endorsed the Orff approaches. It contained a number of practical suggestions for engaging children in creative activities.

In 1970 it was Paynter who addressed the MEUT Association. The same year he and Aston had published *Sound and Silence*, offering extensive ideas on establishing a music curriculum that centred on creative thinking skills. In this influential book, an extensive list of contemporary scores and recordings was included, together with classroom activities exemplified in 36 classroom projects. Some of these projects

were focussed on exploration of instruments and melodic and harmonic experimentation, with many references to contemporary music and the various directions of twentieth-century music. In Paynter and Aston's words, the book set out to provide suggestions for creative experiments in music. They were in harmony with the 'child-centred' movement of the 1960s in claiming that education did not begin with boxes filled with facts to be memorised and suggesting that education should start from the needs of the individual.

Similar arguments were outlined in the conclusions of the Plowden Report, three years earlier than Paynter and Aston proposals. The report claimed that 'finding out' had proved to be better for children than 'being told' and that children's capacity to create - in words, pictorially and through many other forms of expression - was astonishing (CACE, 1967, Vol. 1: 460). Other themes stressed in the Report were the practical implications of 'discovery learning' for the timetable, arguing for more 'flexibility' in the curriculum. It was claimed that the extent to which subject matters had to be classified and the headings under which the classification was made should vary with the age of the children, with the demands made by the subject being studied, and with the school circumstances. Moreover, all practices that predetermine 'the pattern and impose(s) it upon all' were to be condemned (CACE, 1967, Vol. 1: 198). The following paragraph summarises the philosophy of education embedded in the Plowden Report:

The school sets out deliberately to devise the right environment for children, to allow them to be themselves and to develop in the way and at the pace appropriate to them... It lays special stress on **individual discovery**, on first-hand experience and on opportunities for **creative work**. It insists that knowledge does not fall into neatly

separate compartments and that work and play are not opposite but complementary.  
[emphasis added] (CACE, 1967, Vol. 1: 187-188)

Paynter's work *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum* (Paynter, 1982) with the Schools Council had a profound influence on creative music-making at secondary education level. The focus was on active involvement with music that would be accessible for the majority of students, 'regardless of their previous experience and training' (Paynter, 1992: 6). Secondary schools came to dominate the agenda about creativity with an emphasis on the significance of contemporary music. The Canadian Schafer produced *The Composer in the Classroom* (Schafer, 1969), a study that proved to be influential in the UK. In it, he described dialogues held with elementary, high school, and first-year university students. This work was later reprinted within *Creative Music Education* (Schafer, 1979) together with four earlier works, edited originally as separate booklets under the titles: *Ear Cleaning*, *The New Soundscape*, *When Words Sing*, and *The Rhinoceros in the Classroom*. Examples of music lessons covering the topics of noise, silence, tone, timbre, and texture were included. This relatively avant-garde approach exhibited a degree of musical specialisation that was arguably inhibiting to the primary school music teacher. The progress of the ideas 'appeared to be diverted by imported methodologies, an emphasis upon teacher specialisation, and by a style-centred approach to musical creativity stemming from the secondary schools' (Cox, 1998: 249). A combined example of 'imported methodology' and 'teacher specialisation' is the book *Experiments in Sound*, by the German university lecturer Meyer-Denkman (1977), adapted for use in English schools by Elizabeth and John Paynter. It was developed by Meyer-Denkman after years of study and interpretation of 'new music', attending Darmstadt and Cologne New Music Courses and participating in various

musical events with contemporary composers, including John Cage and Maruicio Kaegel.

The creativity movement may be seen as problematic. The Plowden Report was not free of criticism. Peters (1969a) pointed out that even though the view of education taken in the report was a great advance on the more authoritarian thinking that came before it, it was theoretically unsatisfactory and far from the practical needs of the time. He argued against the report's stress on 'individual discovery' and 'creative work', as follows:

It may well be that a very *bad* way of developing this [creativity] is to give children too many opportunities for uninformed 'choices' too young... General talk of 'creativity' is cant: for **there is no such general faculty**...and to be 'creative' in any sphere presupposes some mastery of the skills and body of knowledge appropriate to it. [emphasis mine] (Peters, 1969b: 11)

The implication of all these points, stated Peters, was that children need to be initiated into the skills and bodies of knowledge that form our heritage, before they can strike on their own. The different arguments, for and against 'creative work', 'individual discovery' and 'child-centredness', illustrate the educational debate of the day. Peters explained the controversy as follows:

The educational system of the country is in a highly fluid state; there is little agreement about the aims of education; the curriculum is everywhere under discussion; teaching methods are constantly being queried and the lack of...knowledge about their effectiveness is becoming patent. (Peters, 1969b: 19)

With the publication of the *Black Papers* (Cox and Dyson, 1971) the discussions on 'creative activities' and 'child-centredness', in particular the arguments in favour,

became highly contested. Blocksidge (1976), writing in one of the later MEUT *Bulletin*, symbolised the new perspectives that were coming into the educational agenda:

The theory that primary education should be based on what children like to do is being seriously questioned, not only by parents, but by teachers and educationists alike. Is the correct balance being maintained? Are essential skills being omitted? (Blocksidge, in Cox, 1998: 251)

In 1983 the MEUT Association was forced to close due to a decline in membership associated with the reduction in the number of music students in colleges of education, as well as the greater involvement of local education authorities in the provision of in-service training. It has been argued that the introduction of Orff instruments into the school ‘resulted in the creation of a musical sub-culture, characterised by decorative *glissandi* and circling *ostinati*, played on specially designed classroom instruments and based on pentatonic materials’ (Swanwick, 1999: 37). Moreover, the word ‘music’ was frequently substituted by the word ‘sound’ from books for use in schools (for example Paynter and Aston’s *Sound and Silence*, Schafer’s *The New Soundscape*, and Tillman’s *Exploring Sound*). Teachers encouraged pupils to become performers and composers of ‘texture’ pieces, using repertoires of aleatoric devices and randomised lists of numbers. Tonality and defined pitch were no longer used and students recorded ‘found’ sounds in their environments, using them in the composition of sound collages represented by graphic scores.

Arguably, the removal of ‘obstacles’ such as the time-consuming technique required of orchestral instruments or accurate pitched singing, made life easier for some



teachers and pupils. It has been suggested (Swanwick, 1974: 41) that some of the experiments in 'creative work' were taking place with groups of children designated as 'less-able', and this was seen as often of great value. It was held that, through creative work, a majority of pupils of all ages and abilities would experience the satisfaction of participation (Department of Education and Science, 1970). Nevertheless, some objections were raised against the use of the word 'creative' because of the conceptual confusion surrounding the term. Swanwick (1974: 41) maintained that the misuse of the word implied 'the exclusion of other ways of engaging with children in musical activities', and suggested that the use of more 'neutral' words like improvisation and composition instead of 'creative activities' would prevent the conceptual confusion. He identified four conditions of practice in the 1970s' concept of creativity, namely: a premium on imaginative activities, an emphasis on children making up their own music, sympathy with the techniques of the avant-garde and an urge to integrate. He stressed the possibility of widening the applicability of creativity if people were 'prepared to regard imagination as the keystone and waive the other three conditions' (Swanwick, 1979: 92). Conversely, influences from USA supported the emphasis on contemporary music:

The materials of instruction must be drawn from the total spectrum of the art with primary emphasis on the materials of music today. For the strongest bond between the musical art and the student is sensitivity to contemporary life. (Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program, 1970)

However, Swanwick pointed out that for children contemporary music was not necessarily the music recently composed, but the music that was readily available. This music came to students 'via the pressing of a button, going to the cinema or to concerts or discos' (Swanwick, 1979: 87-88).

Following the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales, teachers have been required to implement the programmes approved by the Secretary of State for Education. The details of the new curriculum were first set out as *Music in the National Curriculum* (Department of Education and Science, 1992), reviewed by the Department for Education (1995) and again with *Music. The National Curriculum for England* (DFEE and QCA, 1999b). Pupils are currently required to engage in music through the inter-related experiential modes of performing, composing, listening and appraising. It might be argued that the emphasis on 'creativity work', of the 1960s and 70s, has contributed to the 'composing' component of the new curriculum. In the statutory guidelines, the terms 'improvisation' and 'composition' are considered under the umbrella of creative activities (DFEE and QCA 1999a, 1999b).

Although 'creative activities' are an accepted part of the curriculum, and have been for many years, there is little knowledge of how teachers view creativity and its associated activities. This is the justification for the present study.

### **3.4 – Summary and conclusions**

Proposals for creativity are to be found in historical Western methods of music education, including those of Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, Yorke Trotter and Curwen. Proposals for 'creative activities' in music education during the last 50 years have been influenced by child-centred and progressivist ideology as exemplified in the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967). A culminating moment was the debate around the

Plowden Report's stress on 'individual discovery' and 'creative work'. Arguments for (Paynter and Aston, 1970) and against this sort of activities (Cox and Dyson, 1971) suggested that the concept of creativity continues to be problematic. During the 1970s and 1980s many of the proposals for creativity emphasised children using contemporary music. Secondary schools became dominant in the creativity agenda with direct influence from the musical avant-garde. In 1988 a statutory school curriculum was introduced by law, with music being introduced first in 1992. The latest version of it (DfEE and QCA, 1999b) is now being implemented. To some extent the past debate on creativity has informed the formulation of the new National Curriculum for music. The current specifications promote a form of practice which is concerned with the development of musical 'knowledge and understanding' through three basic experiential modes or 'skills': performing, composing (comprising creating and developing musical ideas, improvising and exploring) and appraising. In the English National Curriculum, the term 'creating' is clearly related to the 'new' concept as defined by Elliott (1971), connecting 'the previously unconnected in ways that are new and meaningful to the individual concerned' (Duffy, 1998: 18). As pointed out in Chapter 2, contemporary educators and bodies like the Calouste Goulbenkian Foundation (1982) and the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999) see creativity as a 'universal potential'.

Music educators over at least the last a hundred years assume that all pupils can be creative and should be engaged in creative activities, as a way to understand music itself. They do not consider the personal characteristics of particularly 'creative pupils'. They emphasise the process of creation but largely refer to the way that

creative activities should be taught. The pupils' process of creation is given little consideration.

The physical and emotional environments that are appropriate to the development of the pupils' creativity are little discussed in the music education literature. Yorke Trotter (1914) mentions the need to engage the pupils' emotions before starting with the intellectual side of their music education. This is one of the relatively few references to the pupils' motivation from the historic approaches examined. Contemporary music educators such as Odam (2000) and Paynter (1982, 1992) focus more on the physical environment. Paynter (1982), for example, describes the physical settings, instruments and resources needed in schools to implement projects involving 'creative activities'.

Regarding the creative product many music educators do not discuss the issue. This has prompted Elliott (1995) to say that:

In a situation where everything counts, nothing counts, and the concepts of musical challenges, musicianship, and creative achievements evaporate. Notice, also, that when a teacher declares that everything his or her students do is automatically creative, then there is nothing more to do and the teacher is instantly free to teach nothing at all. (Elliott, 1995: 222)

During early ages in school music education, the emphasis is on exploration rather than production of original material. Elliott (1995) suggests that, in this way, the concept of creativity can be broadened to the extent of nonsense, unless there is clear guidance from the teacher. These issues will be returned to when discussing what the teachers participating in the study have to say in Part Three.

# CHAPTER 4

## PREVIOUS STUDIES OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY

## **CHAPTER 4. PREVIOUS STUDIES OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY**

### **4.1 - Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to consider relevant psychology, education and music education studies of teachers' perceptions of creativity. General perceptions of creativity and specific perceptions of musical creativity are considered, although it has to be recognised that the latter is an area of research that is rather underdeveloped. In the previous chapter the notion of creativity in music education has been outlined and roots for the present proposals (DfEE and QCA, 1999a) have been suggested. This study is concerned with teachers' perceptions of creativity and before discussing the methodology to be used, in Part Two, there is a need to consider some teachers' attitudes towards creativity as described in the literature. This is for the purpose of firstly comparing the literature with the perceptions of the teachers participating in the study in Part Three, and secondly examining the methodology of previous studies and their possible strengths and shortcomings for Part Two.

Despite a great body of research into creativity and its role in education, mainly coming from the USA, very few studies appear to have focused on the teachers' views on the subject. According to Fryer and Collings (1991b: 75), creativity has never been a major issue in British mainstream education 'as evidenced by the lack of publications'. It is apparent that even less studies were undertaken considering the teachers' perceptions of creativity. A few studies have focussed on teachers' attitudes

to personality characteristics regarded as typical of creative pupils. Other studies explored teachers' perceptions in an indirect way, such as through measuring attitudes before and after creativity consciousness-raising exercises. In the following four sections the methods and conclusions of these studies are considered. Each section is focussed on one of the four themes suggested in Chapter 2 (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product). The contributions and limitations of these studies are then discussed in the final section.

#### **4.2 - Teachers' perceptions of creative pupils**

Research studies that have explored teachers' attitudes to personality characteristics regarded as typical of creative pupils include those of Ohuche (1986), Schaefer (1973), Torrance (1965, 1975) and Tan-William (1981). In these studies the researchers generally assessed the teachers' understanding of creativity on the basis of criteria which they had already selected. Torrance (1965), for example, explored the attitudes of over a thousand teachers from the USA, Germany, Greece, India and Philippines. He concluded that teachers in all five cultures could be punishing children who displayed the characteristic qualities of what he regarded as creative behaviour: those courageous in their convictions, the intuitive pupils, the emotionally sensitive, the visionaries, the children unwilling to accept assertions without evidence and the pupils who regress occasionally. He pointed out that these cultures might be unduly rewarding obedience, willingness to accept judgements of authorities, courtesy, popularity and finishing the work on time.

Ohuche (1986) carried out a large study in Nigeria developing Torrance's (1975) earlier work. One hundred and twenty-seven secondary Igbo teachers participated in her study. They attached a great deal of importance to sincerity, industry, obedience, self-confidence and consideration for others, but not to non-conformity. Ohuche described the Igbo behaviour as pertaining to a culture where conformity was a central value. She noted that, perhaps not surprisingly, Igbo teachers wanted their pupils to be industrious, since the Nigerian examination system was highly competitive.

Treffinger *et al* (1968) explored teachers' perceptions in an indirect way, measuring attitudes before and after creativity consciousness-raising exercises. These researchers assessed the views of two hundred and fifty teachers and administrators from all grade levels from public and parochial Northern New York schools, before and after a creativity consciousness-raising in-service programme. The programme was conducted by the authors of the study and covered a four-day period of workshops. Some of the aims were to help teachers evaluate approaches to creativity and its measurements, using innovative materials and approaches in their classroom and making appropriate modifications for their purposes. Another aim was to recognise the problems which should be dealt with if educators were to identify and work with creative pupils. Prior to the first session, participants took part in a fourteen-item attitude survey and, at the end of the programme, this was re-administered. The questions asked related to whether the respondents believed that creativity is inherited or can be taught, whether it is desirable, and whether creative children can be identified or not. Participants had to choose their level of agreement



on a five point Likert-type scale ('strongly agree / strongly disagree'). Example items included were:

- Even if it is possible to teach children to become more creative, there are serious questions about the necessity or wisdom of doing so.
- If we were to try to teach pupils to become more creative, we run the risk of creating a nation of non-conforming individualists who will be unable to maintain normal social relations.
- Creative problem solving ability is probably a natural strength that some students have and others do not, so that most of our efforts to improve it in our students are in vain.
- The most typical creative person is the "beatnik" or "non-conformist" type who may well be in need of a bath. (Treffinger *et al*, 1968: 244)

Some of the conclusions drawn by the study supported the notion that in-service education programmes in creative problem solving can facilitate teachers' ability to identify creative pupils and help educators develop greater understanding and more favourable attitudes towards creative abilities. However, this study does not seem to directly illustrate teachers' views on creative pupils because the research was not conducted to ascertain teachers' views *per se*, but rather as part of a teacher development activity. Moreover, some of the items used in the questionnaire seem unsatisfactory as they contain more than one idea (such as 'the risk of creating a nation of individualists who will be unable to maintain normal social relations'), so that it is possible to agree with one part of a question but disagree with another. In spite of this, Tan-William (1981) explored the attitudes of 33 male and 101 female Canadian student teachers using the questionnaire devised by Treffinger. He reported that his data demonstrate more favourable than unfavourable attitudes towards creativity, but noted that, though respondents thought creativity was widespread and attainable through education, some student teachers were unsure whether creativity

was largely inherited and also whether it was necessary to teach children to be creative.

Bjerstedt (1976) conducted another study of the views of practising teachers on creativity in Sweden. This comprehensive study collected the views of 292 teachers, school-leaders, further education consultants, tutors and lecturers, by means of an unstructured questionnaire survey about creative ability and about the steps they thought schools should take to promote creative behaviour. In addition, two hundred and two teachers were asked to say how they would respond in a number of hypothetical classroom situations, involving various creativity-related behaviours. The results indicated that teachers thought that pupils' responses would be more enthusiastic and open than theirs. Teachers tended to be guarded, considering to what extent creativity would fit in with the lesson, without disrupting their lesson plan.

The results of the survey by Bjerstedt (1976) indicated that the most common definition of creative ability in pupils was in terms of 'independent work', followed by 'richness of ideas', 'originality' and 'the ability to combine'. A request to identify the distinguishing characteristics of highly creative pupils was answered with 280 different responses. These embodied the notion of intellectual capacity and included 'curious', 'full of ideas', 'flexible', 'conscious of problems' and 'keen to discuss things'. Distinctive personality traits of creative pupils, as described by teachers, were independence, unconventionality, openness and confidence.

Runco *et al* (1993) applied social validation methods in a study of parents' and teachers' implicit theories of the indicative and contra-indicative aspects of

children's creativity. In social validation research, the instruments (e.g. questionnaires and themes for interviews) are developed from ideas gathered from significant individuals who are held to be important in the child's natural environment. They are based on implicit theories rather than the explicit theories of professional researchers. In social validation research, participants are asked what they think, rather than asked to choose the degree to which they agree or disagree with the researchers' hypotheses. One of the aims of the research by Runco *et al* (1993) was to extend earlier research on parents' and teachers' implicit theories on children's creativity and test them against those reported in previous research (i.e. Torrance, 1963). Given the researchers' interest in comparing parents and teachers, four non-overlapping populations were sampled: parents who were teachers, parents who were not teachers, teachers who were not parents, and adults who were neither parents nor teachers. Participants were provided with three hundred adjectives in two versions administered randomly to them. One version asked participants to indicate which adjectives described creative children and the other version asked them which adjectives described uncreative children. Of the three hundred adjectives, 36 were chosen by at least 50% of the total subjects. All four groups nominated the following adjectives as creative traits: active, adventurous, alert, ambitious, artistic, capable, curious, dreamy, energetic, enthusiastic and imaginative. The results illustrated differences between groups. The 'teachers only' selected emotional, friendly, spontaneous, easy-going and cheerful. The 'parents only' chose enterprising, industrious, resourceful, self-confident, progressive and impulsive.

There was less agreement with regard to the characteristics of **uncreative** children. Thirty-six adjectives were nominated by at least 30% of the subjects in each group.

Of the 36 adjectives, only five were chosen by all four groups: apathetic, cold, cynical, dull and narrow. The individual group choices were, again, qualitatively different. The 'parents only' chose absent-minded, awkward, commonplace, confused, conventional and despondent. The teachers chose arrogant, cautious, cold, complaining, faultfinding, gloomy, hard headed, hard hearted, headstrong, inhibited, pessimistic, self-centred, self-pitying, shallow, unambitious and whiny. A comparison of the adjectives nominated in this study with Torrance (1963) shows that only 8 of Runco's adjectives were included in the 66 characteristics given as indicative of creativity by Torrance: emotional, energetic, industrious, self-confident, adventurous, affectionate, curious and humorous. Many of these terms had low rankings in the samples of Torrance (1963).

Furthermore, Runco's study suggested that implicit theories act as standards against which pupils' behaviours and performances are judged, and lead to particular expectations that can significantly influence the pupils' performance. If a teacher expects one behaviour from a child and encounters another, there is a danger of 'mismatch'. Cropley (1992) has suggested that a 'mismatch' between a creative pupil and his or her teacher is likely to interfere with the child's intellectual and creative development. He further maintains that teachers should challenge pupils appropriately. A good match is optimal: not too far beyond the child, but not too easy and boring.

A recent study by Craft (1998) has focused on British educators' perspectives on creativity. Her sample contained eighteen students undertaking an Open University postgraduate course, which was devised to support their capability in fostering

learner creativity across the curriculum. An ethnomethodological approach was used to track the perceptions of the participants and various themes arose from the data, illuminating educator perceptions of fostering creativity in learners. The data collection methods used included participant observation, informal discussions and two questionnaires, one of them based on that of Fryer and Collings (1991a) and their exploration of teachers' definitions of and attitudes toward creativity. In addition, each participant was interviewed twice. Some of the themes that emerged were in tune with the description of the characteristics of creative pupils (Runco *et al*, 1993). For example, a major theme was the belief that creativity involved taking risks. Another was the belief that creativity involved openness or receptivity to a wide range of influences, including intuitive ones. Participants stated other views associated with educators' creativity as well as learners. They perceived that self-esteem and self-confidence needed to be nourished in order to be creative, requiring personal autonomy and confidence with one's own artistry.

#### **4.3 - Teachers' perceptions of the environment for creativity**

Webster (1996: 91-92) describes the environment as 'the host of characteristics that define the creator's working conditions and contribute to the creative process'. Some of these characteristics, pointed out by Webster, are the financial support and family conditions, as well as the societal expectations, peer pressure, the availability of musical instruments and the acoustics.

Paynter (1982: 155-161) described some teachers' views on environmental issues concerning accommodation, drawing from written accounts and interviews with

Heads and music teachers involved in the Schools Council Project *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum*. The teachers' comments stressed the need for music to be recognised as a practical subject, and therefore, with a type of 'workshop' accommodation rather than conventional classrooms. Designs of rooms should be flexible, adaptable to the needs of every teacher, and should cover a broad variety of activities. These would include instrumental teaching, ensemble rehearsal, class-singing, large-group improvisation/composition, small/medium sized ensembles, small group improvisation/composition/arrangement, individual composition or arrangement, work with tape-recorder/electric instruments, movement with music and listening. Although increasing the space for music teaching was not always necessary, redistribution of the space was indicated to help increasing flexibility. The facilities and the distribution of rooms in the music department as a whole were also considered, stressing the need for a variety of rooms, large and small. Other facilities listed were: audio equipment, books and sheet music, classroom instruments (including percussion instruments such as glockenspiels, xylophones, drums, beaters, triangles and finger cymbals), orchestral and band instruments and other materials (e.g. curtains to reduce acoustic reverberation).

Paynter (1982: 68) suggested that music teachers who introduced a workshop organisation in their classroom were concerned about their own role. In particular, they were worried about whether they were becoming superfluous or whether they were becoming technicians taking care of the equipment. They were also concerned about how their role as teacher/director was reshaped.

In a recent study aimed at identifying a basis for effective composing classroom practice, Odam (2000) points out that group-work is the dominant working method in most schools. As observed in Chapter 1 (section 3) he suggests that much time is wasted in this type of work and this contributes to stress in both pupils and teachers.

Fryer (1996) considers the physical as well as the motivational environment. She says that to support creativity pupils might need a personal space in which to work individually, away from the group, until they feel comfortable to share their new ideas with others. She suggests that group activities may not necessarily be conducive to creative work. What is important is to give students space to think. She notes that as well as good physical environment, pupils need intrinsic motivation to become creative. Amabile (1983) has identified intrinsic motivation as a key factor in creative performance. The activities and the learning interests of the students may engender this motivation. This is what Beetlestone (1998) calls 'intellectual climate', described earlier in Chapter 2 (section 5). Cropley (1992) also suggests that parents who encourage children to value their own opinions, who are not over-protective and who foster self-sufficiency, are more successful in promoting their children's creativity than those parents who are domineering and intrusive with their children.

From the literature review it seems that there are many aspects to research under the heading of 'environment'. Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1994) has suggested that the most important question in creativity is *where* is creativity and not *what* is creativity. To understand the product originated by the creative process it is necessary to consider the historical, social and cultural setting:

Creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:6)

At this point it should be noted that any further analysis of the historical, social and cultural setting of where the product originates would be beyond the scope of this study. A further broadening of focus would have been counterproductive, taking into account the scope of the three research questions (Chapter 1, section 4) and the manageability of the project. The literature has nonetheless been reviewed systematically throughout the research process. The most recently published investigations relevant for this enquiry are incorporated in the last chapter (section 4, 'Suggestions for further research').

#### **4.4 - Teachers' perceptions of the creative process**

In spite of the existence of many studies into the process of creation, as examined in Chapter 2 (section 6), there has been very little research into teachers' perceptions of the process, especially in the field of music education. Nevertheless, some research has focused on views about the creative process of music students, performers and composers (Bennett, 1975, 1976; Brinkman, 1999; Cheng, 1999; Kennedy, 1999; De Souza Fleith *et al*, 2000). In this section the intention is to build a coherent picture of the process of creation from a teachers' point of view, drawing from these somewhat scattered sources.



Early in the 1940s Doig (1941, 1942a, 1942b) studied the teaching of musical composition with children between the ages of six and sixteen. She presented various tasks to her pupils, including writing music to a predetermined text, writing music on a given subject and composing original pieces to illustrate given rhythmic problems. The composition procedure would start with individual pupils singing musical phrases which the teacher transcribed to music notation. The whole group would then decide what phrase to include in the melody they were developing, by casting everybody's vote, and this process would go on until the melody was finished. All the compositions were the result of group rather than individual effort. She outlined the tendencies and musical elements used by the different age groups of children and concluded that creative activity conducted as described above was found to be educationally profitable. However, Bennett (1975, 1976) failed to see what this procedure, used in teaching composition in state schools, had to do with the way music was really created. He investigated the process of musical creation of eight adult composers and presented a strategy for helping pupils to learn to compose, called the 'improvisational approach'. This approach included the pupils' free access to a musical instrument for the purpose of improvisation, and the recording of the pupils' improvisations. After more than forty of such recordings, student and teacher should set further goals (for example, composing a piece of music for a play). The use of music notation should be delayed until the pupil was confident at creating music. Although Bennett did not explore the potential of his approach to learn musical composition, it appears that his view of the creative process was the same for all pupils.

Recent studies have shown that improvisation causes anxiety for many teachers who fear their own inadequate grounding in this area. Gibbs (1994) has explained that what frustrates teachers in developing their own skills and those of their students is a pervasive belief that improvisation can not really be taught. Gibbs has tried to challenge this belief by examining some of the assumptions embedded into it, namely that improvisation is a mysterious process, must be original, belongs to jazz and popular music, is only for the naturally gifted few, is caught rather than taught and can be taught only by good improvisers. In doing this, she has offered a new set of assumptions, claiming that music teachers should assume that improvisation can be taught and it is a worthwhile valued part of the curriculum. It might be noted, that Gibbs' assumptions are not entirely new. Early in the twentieth century, Coleman (1922) claimed that improvisation was the outcome of early habits and that if children began in the earliest stages of their musical development to improvise songs and melodies, they would grow naturally into it, because the pleasure they took in original work was all the stimulation they needed. Nevertheless, Paynter (1982: 81-82) has suggested that part of the problem with 'creative music-making' activities is the lack of teachers' experience in making music themselves, with the result of little follow-up and constructive comment on children's music. He has advised educators to fill the gap in this kind of experience with the attendance at in-service courses or through meetings with other teachers, if it has been missing from their training.

Some educators could also be inclined to avoid the small-group division of a class, a characteristic of this kind of activity, because of the discipline problems which may arise. In an article on the reasons held by educators to avoid open-ended art activities, Szyba (1999) points to several causes. She states that teachers rely on

recipe art lessons because the activity and the outcome are teacher controlled. Like Paynter, she claims that teachers sometimes are not adequately trained to plan expressive art activities for children, nor are they taught how to respond appropriately to the creative process. Highlighting similar arguments to those made by Gibbs (1994), she says that some educators feel that being creative is a talent that you either have or do not have. Findings against this belief have recently been reported at the British Psychological Society's annual conference (Hartley-Brewer, 2000). In this conference, Howe claimed that geniuses are made, not born, and that the secret of success is hard working rather than any innate intellectual gift. While some of the world's greatest composers were child prodigies, including Mozart and Schumann, even the most exceptionally able still took at least ten years of hard study to become a major composer. What makes talented individuals special, say Sloboda and Howe (1991), is their long-term commitment.

A recent study focussed on the music creation process by De Souza Fleith *et al* (2000) involved eleven composers and three performers selected from an early nomination of 56 Brazilian professionals. Although they were composers and performers they were also teachers at some point of their careers. The musicians selected for the investigation represented the following genres: Brazilian popular music (four), classical (four), jazz (three), opera (two), rock (two) and country (one). The participants, despite being well known, had other sources of income, such as music schoolteacher, university professor, chorus master, radio program producer or journalist. They were all interviewed about their musical background and working conditions, as well as asked to explain their definition of creativity and their music creative process. The data enabled the identification of common stages of the

participants' process of composition. Their description paralleled Wallas' (1926) stages with small changes: process triggering, preparation, product elaboration, and product validation. They attached importance to the environment, preferring an organised and quiet place for working. The majority of participants identified creativity as a complex process dependent on various factors and embodying three different operations (observation, experimentation, and transformation). Some of the factors identified were related to the mystic domain ('transcendental' factor) and the instinctive aspects of musicality ('natural' factor), while other were linked to the universality of creativity ('universal' factor) and their own personal influences or trade mark ('personal' factor). Participants recognised creativity as part of everyone's potential, though they stressed that this potential should be trained to facilitate the generation of creative products.

Being that the majority of research concerning composing focuses mainly on professional musicians (Bennett, 1976; Lysaught, 1993; De Souza Feith *et al*, 2000) one might ask whether the compositional processes of trained composers are the same of those used by music students. Kennedy (1999) reported similarities and differences in the uses of time and structure between the compositional processes of a high school student and a collegiate composer. She compared both individuals in a case-study examination, when engaged in a similar task: the setting of a short poem by Robert Frost for voice and piano. Some of the research questions concerned the composer's strategies and procedures, their use of time, the structure of the resulting pieces, their musical backgrounds and their motivation to compose. The techniques of data collection were semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis, carried out by Kennedy, joined by two professional composers. They found

that both case study composers used the piano in an exploratory phase and acknowledged inspiration and revision as components of the creation process. While the high school student composed a song in a tonal/modal jazz style, the graduate composition major wrote a *lied* in an atonal style. The high school student used half of the time of the graduate. Both felt that anyone could compose music, but that interest was a necessary ingredient in the compositional process. They both confirmed the process as a solitary activity, composing in a state of quiet repose and taking extended time to finish the piece.

An additional issue that should be given some consideration is whether all music students follow similar procedures when presented with musical problems. Brinkman (1999) studied the effect of problem finding and creativity style on the musical compositions of high school students. His research sought to understand how the structure of a task encouraged and facilitated creativity. From a pool of 74 students he selected two groups of 16 ('adaptors' and 'innovators') using a set test. Then participants completed two musical exercises: the composition of a melody (open problem), and the composition of a melody using white keys on the keyboard, 12 to 20 measures long, in three-four time and energetic (closed problem). The resulting pieces were scored for creativity by three judges. The results pointed out that no statistically significant interaction between creativity style (adaptor / innovator) and problem type (open / closed) was found. 'Adaptor' students, however, received higher creativity scores under the closed musical problem setting, and 'innovator' students received higher scores with the open musical exercise. These results suggest that not all students work similarly with creative music activities. The issue for music

teachers, that remains unclear, is how to organise a music activity when one of its aims is the encouragement of all pupils' creativity.

#### **4.5 - Teachers' perceptions of creative products**

Despite the studies that employ the Torrance's (1965, 1975) 'Ideal Pupil' checklists, there has been little research into educators' perceptions of creative products. Previous studies have centred around the assessment of pupils' characteristics, rather than the assessment of creative work produced by children. Fryer (1989, 1996) has nevertheless underlined the teachers' preferred criteria in assessing creativity. She carried out a questionnaire survey involving 1028 teachers of various subjects drawn from 57 schools and colleges in various geographical regions of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and completed detailed semi-structured interviews with 31 teachers selected from the sample. In her findings, she pointed out some of the criteria of assessment used by teachers. The preferred criteria for judging the creativity of students' work turned out to be 'imaginative' and 'original' (Fryer, 1996: 20). 'Showing initiative', 'pleasing to the pupil' and 'expressing depth of feeling' were almost as popular with the educators as a whole, and less than a quarter of them saw 'appropriate' as relevant. Some other less popular criteria were 'useful', identified by just over a tenth, and 'elegant' only identified by a 5.7% of the sample as criteria for assessing creativity. This matters, says Fryer, because products and ideas that are just 'original' may have little merit; they could be simply unusual. Again, as noted earlier by White (1968), this points out the limitation of the notion of 'originality'.

Various investigators have come to the conclusion that to justify the description 'creative', work must be not simply original but also useful and valuable. As noted in the third section of this chapter, Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996) suggests that the most important question in creativity is *where* is creativity and not *what* is creativity. He argues that in order to understand the product originated in the creative process it is necessary to consider the historical, social and cultural settings. Sternberg (1999) points to the existence of a paradox within the assessment of creativity: many of us believe we appreciate creative products but that our creative products often are unappreciated by others. He describes seven different types of creative contributions, and calls to attention the fact that people most readily accept the first three. The types include new work that does the following: (1) Conceptual replication. Attempts to determine whether past work is generalizable. (2) Redefinition. Views old work in a new way, perhaps seeing it as answering a question different from that originally intended to answer. (3) Forward incrementation. Extends an already existing paradigm. (4) Advance forward incrementation. Extends an already existing paradigm further than its audience is ready to go at a given time. (5) Re-direction. Starts where others have left off, moving the field in a new direction. (6) Reconstruction and redirection. Returns us to a point that may have been dismissed by much of the field, arguing that it still has life left in it and then attempts to further develop that point. (7) Re-initiation. Begins at a point radically different from the field's current positions, and then takes off in a new direction from there. Sternberg's thesis is that everyone does appreciate creativity, but that people most readily accept the first three types (Conceptual replication, Redefinition and Forward implementation). What is needed is to reward people who are willing to risk such

ideas, even if these ideas need further formation or revision, and also to recognise that novelty is not equal to quality.

Research on British teachers by Fryer (1996) has pointed out that teachers of maths, science or technology were less inclined to look for 'self-expression' as evidence of creativity. For the teachers participating in her study, having identified some assessment criteria, the next step was to decide how to apply them. Many of the teachers said they preferred to judge the pupil's work against his or her past performance, individualising the assessment. Fryer suggested that art and design educators were amongst the most confident about assessing creativity. Approximately half of the teachers stated that the only person who could legitimately assess creative work was the person who had produced it. Moreover, only 6 per cent of the sample believed that society had the legitimate right to define products as creative. In schools, assessment is carried out by the teacher, following the written guidelines and prescribed targets of the National Curriculum. However, there is scope for self-evaluation or peer assessment. Peer assessment, states Fryer, is a common practice in design. In order not to inhibit innovative ideas, peer assessment needs to be conducted sensitively in a supportive environment. One of the conclusions arising from her study is that to avoid damaging children's self-esteem, any external evaluation of pupil's products needs to be carried out in a way which distinguishes between the work produced and individual feelings of self-worth.



#### 4.6 – Summary: implications for the present research study

There has been little research focussing on British teachers' perceptions of creativity, particularly in the field of music education. Some research studies focus on teachers' attitudes to personality characteristics regarded as typical of **creative pupils** (Ohuche, 1986; Runco *et al*, 1993; Schaefer, 1973; Torrance, 1963, 1965, 1975). Torrance (1963, 1965) explored the description of creative pupils of over a thousand teachers from the USA, Germany, Greece, India and Philippines. He suggested that in all these cultures teachers were inclined to punish children who displayed creative behaviour. There are two limitations however that apply to some of these studies. Firstly, the investigations by Torrance (1963, 1965) and Treffinger *et al* (1968) were based on explicit theories of professional social scientists. They used tests constructed by themselves to ask about the degree to which educators would agree with hypotheses. For example, the five point Likert-type scale developed by Treffinger *et al* (1968) presented the researcher's assumptions imbedded in their items. In spite of this, the items devised by Treffinger *et al* were used by Tan-William (1981) in a replication of the study in Canada. The second limitation that may be noted concerns the research work carried out during creativity consciousness-raising exercises, in-service training courses and creativity workshops. These studies (Treffinger *et al*, 1968; Craft, 1998) may be strongly biased towards a positive attitude about creativity. Treffinger *et al*'s (1968) study was conducted during an in-service programme on creativity. Craft (1998) carried out her British investigation during an Open University postgraduate course, which was devised to support teachers' capability in fostering learner creativity across the curriculum.

Runco *et al* (1993) used social validation techniques in order to avoid the first limitation. Instead of using tests constructed by researchers to ask about the degree to which educators would agree with theoretically derived propositions, they carried out preliminary interviews with teachers in order to uncover and gather their implicit theories. Then they based their questionnaires on the teachers' ideas rather than the theories of professional social scientists (see Chapter 4, section 2). The results described the personality of creative pupils as active, adventurous, alert, ambitious, artistic, capable, curious, dreamy, energetic, enthusiastic and imaginative. A comparison with Torrance (1963) shows that only 8 of his 66 characteristics given as indicative of creativity were noted by participants in Runco's research.

Previous research studies focussing on the **environment for creativity** have been considered by authors including Webster (1996), Paynter (1982), Odam (2000), Fryer (1996), Amabile (1983) and Cropley (1992). Issues regarding working methods, teacher accommodation and resources have been examined, taking into account the physical as well as the motivational environment as defined in Chapter 2 (section 4). It is apparent that the scattered sources on teachers' perceptions of the environment for creativity underline the interest of including this theme in the present study.

Studies into music teachers' perceptions of the **creative process** are almost non-existent. Nevertheless, some research in this area has been done involving composers and music students (Chapter 4, section 4). Bennett (1975, 1976) studied the creative processes of eight adult composers and proposed his 'improvisational approach' for helping pupils learning to compose. This approach incorporated teacher

demonstrations and an environment characterised by a great deal of music improvising. Other authors (Gibbs, 1994; Paynter, 1982) suggest that the lack of teachers confidence in improvising and composing might result in little follow-up and constructive comment on children's music. De Souza Fleith *et al* (2000), in recent research into the creation process of Brazilian musicians, characterise creativity as a complex process dependent on various factors (transcendental, natural, universal and personal) and three different operations (observation, experimentation and transformation). Participants described their process of composition paralleling Wallas' (1926) stages with small changes: process triggering, preparation, product elaboration and product validation. The fact that the majority of studies about the creative process are focused on professional musicians, leaves several questions unanswered. The first one is whether creation processes of trained composers are the same as those of music students. Kennedy (1999) found differences in the uses of time and structure in a case-study comparison between the compositional processes of a high school student and a collegiate composer, both engaged in a similar task. They both, however, confirmed the process as a solitary situation, composing in a state of quiet repose and taking extended time to finish the task. The second question is whether all music students follow similar procedures when presented with musical problems concerned with improvisation and composition. Brinkman (1999) presented 'open' and 'closed' musical exercises to students characterised as 'adaptors' and 'innovators'. His results do not show significant differences but suggest that 'adaptor' students work better with closed musical exercises, and innovator students work better with open-ended activities. The issue for music teachers, is how to organise an activity when one of its aims is the encouragement of creativity in all pupils.

In a comprehensive investigation by Fryer (1996: 20), a sample of teachers of all curricular areas and levels of education was studied. She described the preferred teachers' criteria for judging the creativity of their **pupils' products** as 'imaginative', 'original for the pupil' and 'expressing depth of feeling'. However the issue of the teachers' perception of any received conventions for teaching and their influence on the assessment of the pupils' work was not considered. Music teachers were not examined separately in the Fryer's enquiry, but within the 'arts teachers' group.

The present study aims at describing the music teachers' understanding of creativity and, in particular, their perceptions of creative **pupils**, the **environment** for creativity, the creative **process** and the creative **product**. During the last decades, quantitative studies based on widespread administration of 'creativity tests' have provided a good description of the personality traits of creative children and teachers' attitudes towards creativity (Runco *et al*, 1993; Fryer 1996). These studies, nonetheless, have been characterised by short explanations, if any, when discussing music education issues, providing a superficial understanding of what goes on in educational music settings.

It is apparent that research into teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education is an area that has remained relatively unexplored, in particular, research aimed at understanding the nature, conditions and interactions of music students with their teachers during activities aimed at developing the pupils' musical creativity. The present research work investigates this issue focussing on the teachers' point of view.

## SUMMARY OF PART ONE

Current proposals for creativity in education are examined in Chapter 1, including the references to creativity that are made in the latest version of the English National Curriculum for music (DfEE and QCA, 1999a). From a review of the literature, it is apparent that there are different views on creativity and that music teachers are likely to have a variety of opinions about this issue. The purpose of this study is to explore (a) the teachers' perceptions of creativity, (b) their perceptions compared with the literature and (c) the influence of their backgrounds on their perceptions.

Several meanings of the word 'creativity' were examined (Chapter 2) drawing on aesthetics, philosophy, musicology, psychology and education. Four themes have been discussed: the characterisation of the creative individual, the environment for creativity, the description of the creative process and the definition of the creative product. A theoretical four-fold framework is suggested for the study of the music teachers' perceptions of creativity: Pupil-Environment-Process-Product.

In Chapter 3 attention is given to the notion of creativity in some Western theories of music education, including Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, Yorke Trotter and Curwen. Proposals for creative activities in music education in England from 1950 onwards are reviewed and it is suggested that the 1960s and 1970s debate regarding 'creative activities' influenced the current statutory guidelines. These specifications (DfEE and QCA, 1999a) lead to a form of practice which is concerned with the development of musical 'knowledge and understanding' through three basic 'skills':

performing, composing (including creating and developing musical ideas, improvising and exploring) and appraising.

Chapter 4 is an overview of previous research studies of teachers' perceptions of creativity, along with the few available studies dealing with music teachers' perceptions. The framework proposed in Chapter 2 is followed to present teachers' perceptions of creative pupils, environment, process and products. In particular, this chapter is concerned with the implications stemming from the conclusions and methodologies of previous investigations. In Part Two these implications are taken into account when describing and discussing the appropriate research design for the present enquiry.

In the next two chapters the methodology, techniques of data gathering and planning of this study are described. Issues regarding research ethics, data collection and analysis of interview transcripts are considered in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 three consecutive pilot studies are presented, with special attention to the issue of how the pilots shaped the methods used in the final enquiry.

***PART TWO:***  
***METHODOLOGY***

# CHAPTER 5

## METHODS AND METHODOLOGY



## **CHAPTER 5. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 – Introduction**

This study is concerned with eliciting teachers' perceptions of creativity. In the present chapter the methods used in this enquiry are described and justified, and there is reference to, and discussion of, the methods in action. Some reflections on the methods and their limitations are put forward for consideration. Modification of methods and research design following pilot studies are further explained in Chapter 6.

Denzin (1994) describes the research process as a developing construction, suggesting that the research practices used in a study depend on the questions that are asked. And these research practices may be characterised as either scientific or interpretative. These two views of social science are related to the two conceptions of social reality identified by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000). They represent different ways of looking at the social world. The scientific approach assumes that social sciences are similar to natural sciences and are consequently concerned with the discovering of universal truths; the reality is 'out there' and the researcher goes there and researches it. The interpretative approach assumes that human behaviour differs from any other natural phenomena. People are different from each other and, therefore, meanings are socially constructed.

During the last decades many expressions have been used to name the two approaches: the scientific has been named positivistic and quantitative; the

interpretative has been loosely labelled as naturalistic, ethnographic and qualitative. Given the nature of the main aim of this investigation – i.e. to explore music teachers' perceptions of creativity – and the fact that no claim is being made to generalise the findings over the total population of secondary school music teachers, a qualitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate for this particular study, employing both observation and interview. However, the qualitative paradigm, referred by Denzin (1994:18) as a 'specific story-telling tradition', embodies a significant variety of research processes. As Brown and Dowling (1998) note, educational research should be conceived primarily as the application of a coherent and reflexive way of questioning, a mode of interrogation, rather than a collection of techniques. It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the methodological assumptions underpinning this research and the influence of those assumptions on the conduct of the enquiry.

## **5.2 - The research process**

Guba and Lincoln (1982) argue that the difference in approach between quantitative and qualitative frameworks is much more fundamental than the location of the inquiry or the differences in methods employed. They suggest that the two approaches (referred by them as 'rationalistic' and 'naturalistic'), differ on five basic underlying axioms, namely: (a) the nature of reality, (b) the nature of truth statements, (c) the inquirer-object relationship, (d) the role of values to the inquiry and (e) the attribution and explanation of action (Guba and Lincoln, 1982: 237-239). Since the present study is seen as being within a qualitative framework, Guba and Lincoln's 'naturalistic' approach axioms are used to illustrate the author's

methodological research assumptions. With regard to the nature of reality, Guba and Lincoln suggest that it is influenced by values, attitudes and the meanings which individuals ascribe to their experiences, stressing that the concern is with reality as lived by the participants of the research. This emphasis is in keeping with the focus of this particular study, which emphasises the teachers' perspectives on creativity as lived by the participants during music activities in educational settings.

Regarding the nature of truth statements, it is suggested that the aim of the naturalistic inquiry is to develop context-bound explanations describing individual cases. Generalisations are not the prime focus since the cases are neither context nor time free. The reader of the research will draw any identifications depending on his or her experience and degree of contextual similarity. Bresler and Stake (1992) point out a distinction between experiential understanding and formal explanation, stressing the importance of providing research readers with vicarious experience. In a similar way, Eisner (1981) sees qualitative research as being concerned with the formation of meaning rather than with the discovery of truth. He has suggested that 'particulars exemplify more than they describe directly' (Eisner, 1991: 38). The stress on the particular and the provision of explicit experience is important in the context of this study, which seeks to make the music teachers' attitudes on creativity more understandable rather than provide prescriptions for practice.

With regard to both the inquirer-object relationship and the role of values in inquiry, Guba and Lincoln (1982) point out the researcher's subjective influence in the research. They argue that inquiry is always value bound and that researcher's values influence the choice, framing and focusing of the problem, the paradigm selected, the

choice of methods and substantive theory used to guide collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Brown and Dowling (1998) also suggest that researcher's values cannot be disposed of and, therefore, those involved in research need to think about their own values and openly acknowledge them.

The last axiom underlying naturalistic research described by Guba and Lincoln is in regard to the attribution and explanation of action. They maintain that the best way to deal with the explanation of any action is to study it in its natural context. An action can only be explained through the interaction of factors and processes, in a context which is non-manipulable. In naturalistic research, action is caused by an interaction of factors that can neither be observed in isolation nor set in a laboratory for manipulation. This axiom is opposed to the rationalistic explanation of action, which includes precise measurement and control of the factors that cause the action.

This study did not set out to test a specific theory. Nonetheless, some theoretical perspective is always needed to guide action. The approach of this enquiry involved having a framework structure which was flexible enough to incorporate ideas which emerged from the investigation. The theoretical framework, derived from the theoretical literature on this topic, provides a general sense of what is relevant for this study. As Bulmer (1984: 37) suggests, 'the world is a vast sea of potential data in which one would swim aimlessly in perpetuity (or drown) without criteria for selecting and organising the data'. Bulmer points out that during the research exercise, concepts are formed both in the light of empirical evidence and in the context of theory, and that both theory and evidence exercise a forceful influence on what emerges.

Because of the lack of standardised procedures in qualitative research, methodological procedures need to be explicit. There appears to be general agreement regarding the issues that must be considered before embarking on a qualitative study. These include thoughtful reflections and detailed descriptions about the research design, the context, the criteria for selecting participants, the necessary pre-field work to be done, the methods of data collection to be used, and the way in which data will be analysed and interpreted. As Eisner (1991) points out, qualitative research aims to contain attributes such as credibility, coherence, insight and instrumental utility. It is necessary, therefore, to describe carefully all stages of the research. Qualitative enquiry, he argues, is a matter of 'persuasion' because what counts at the end is determined by the personal judgement of the reader and not by any statistical test of significance. A qualitative study persuades by reason, by means of its coherence and the logic of its argument. To this end, in this chapter an attempt is made to make the research process explicit by outlining the procedures. The implications of the four-fold framework (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product) previously outlined from the literature are also considered.

### **5.3 - How to make the teachers' views explicit? Using video extracts of lessons to facilitate the eliciting of teachers' thinking**

It was suggested in chapters 2 and 4 that previous studies into teachers' perceptions of creativity appeared to be based on theories developed by professional social scientists who formulated tests to question the degree to which teachers would agree with their hypotheses. For example, a test developed by Treffinger *et al* (1968)

presented the researchers' assumptions imbedded in their items, which were sometimes difficult to interpret (see quotation in page 69). Another limitation highlighted in Chapter 2 is that some of the studies may be biased towards a positive attitude about creativity because they were carried out during creativity consciousness-raising exercises (e.g. Craft, 1998).

In Chapter 4 (section 2) it was explained that Runco *et al* (1993) did preliminary interviews with teachers to gather their ideas, with the intention to overcome some of these problems. Instead of using tests constructed by themselves, they developed their test items drawing from the teachers' implicit ideas - 'social validation' technique. Using a quantitative approach, they ended with a list of three hundred adjectives from which individuals would choose the more appropriate according to their perceptions of creative students. Runco's final selection of adjectives might easily be used for generalisation due to the incorporation of statistical procedures. However, its utility for describing the 'why' of the views is limited.

In order to prevent validity limitations brought about by confronting teachers with descriptions from the literature, the intention in the present enquiry was not to ask participants directly about theoretical constructs of creativity outlined in academic writing. Instead, participants were interviewed after presenting to them extracts of their **own videotaped classroom music lessons**, containing activities involving creativity processes (e.g. composition, improvisation). Participants were then asked to comment on the extracts, which were used to put into context the concepts of the teachers. The extracts were the starting point from which participants explained their views on musical creativity. This was seen as enabling an explanation of the

teachers' views in their own words instead of using the technical-academic concepts from the literature. The intention was, moreover, to explore further the 'why' of their ideas about creativity. This video technique draws upon work by Silvers (1977), who used it in a study of children's culture, and Lennon (1996), who used a similar method in a qualitative study of piano teachers' thinking.

In her influential study, Silvers (1977) used videotaped lessons when interviewing groups of pupils. Her purpose was to examine the interaction between the adult researcher and the pupils during the group interviews. For this reason her procedure involved three consecutive steps. Firstly, the recording of a lesson in order to produce a 'first-generation' tape. Secondly, playing this tape shortly afterwards to the children involved, while the researcher engaged them in discussion to explore their understandings. This group interviewing was again videotaped, producing a 'second-generation' tape that included the children watching the 'first-generation' tape and the group interview discussion. Finally, selected sequences of the 'second-generation' tape were edited into a 'third-generation' tape to be analysed by the researcher in a later stage.

In the research reported in this study and in Lennon's (1996) case, the aim of the enquiry was not to examine the interaction between the researcher and the music educator during the interview, but to study the teacher's own views about what went on during the video taped lessons. The interviews with teachers were therefore only audio taped, in order to transcribe them afterwards. Thus the video recording process was completed in two steps: first several 'first-generation' tapes were produced videotaping lessons conducted by each participant; and finally some extracts from

these tapes were edited into a 'second-generation' tape to be viewed by both teacher and researcher during the interview. The difference between Lennon's (1996) research and the present study is that she included the selected video extracts in the final report, disclosing the identity of the teachers participating in her study. In this particular study confidentiality and anonymity were important protocols which were negotiated with the teachers at the outset.

It became apparent that using videotaped extracts as a basis for discussion with the teachers **facilitated the eliciting of their perceptions**. This technique allowed participants to explain by themselves what went on during the lessons. This technique also helped to **focus the conversations** with teachers on practice, rather than just producing tentative thinking about the concept of creativity. The effects that the use of this technique had in the research process, including the quantity and quality of the teachers' observations and the benefits for the teachers involved, are further discussed in Chapter 12, section 2 'Further methodological issues'.



#### **5.4 - Preparing for data collection**

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest that in sampling within a qualitative approach, what is important is the potential of each participant to help the researcher to develop theoretical insights into the area of knowledge studied. Because the aim of this study was to cover a range of teachers' views, it adopted what Lincoln and Guba (1985: 201) call a 'purposive' approach to select the participants. Lincoln and Guba note that purposive sampling increases the scope or range of data exposed. Because of the relevance of selecting participants from a variety of contexts, the approach was similar to what they call 'maximum variation sampling'. In this way, the sample to be selected provides a broad range of information. Having focussed the study on secondary school music teachers working in general classroom settings, the criteria for selection was to involve participants with different backgrounds, teaching in a variety of contexts from several secondary schools. According to Spradley's (1979) definition of a 'good informant', teachers had to be qualified, experienced and currently involved in teaching. For the current research it was considered that six teachers would provide a broad range of potential views, and for the purpose of the study, this number would keep the project practicable. The researcher nevertheless was prepared to involve more teachers if, at a later stage, it appeared necessary. In line with this sampling approach, participants were selected from a variety of schools from different socio-geographical situations. The final six teachers come from four different schools: a school for girls from an urban area, a comprehensive inner city school, a school from a rural county and a school from the south coast of England. This range of school contexts and teachers' backgrounds (see pages 103-105 for a description of the participants' musical and professional experiences) were thought

to be sufficiently diverse as to have correspondence with a 'maximum variation sampling' approach, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The limitations of this research design are discussed in the third section of the last chapter.

Having settled the basis for selection, the next step was the location of teachers willing to participate in the study. Initially, prospective participants for a pilot study were contacted with the help of the principal doctoral supervisor. After the pilot study, some of the final participants were contacted with assistance from staff at the researcher's institution. These contacts led to new prospective participants when schoolteachers suggested the name of other colleagues. It has to be pointed out that finding prospective participants willing to give so much of their time was not easy. Twenty teachers were approached, many of whom were unable to participate. This situation delayed the intended timescale of the research process. This difficulty of finding participants is further discussed in the final chapter.

The six teachers were chosen through a process of selection, each picked because he or she represented a somewhat different dimension in keeping with a maximum variation approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 233) have suggested that selection within a maximum variation sample should be 'expanded until redundancy with respect to information' is attained. Brown and Dowling (1998: 11) observe that an additional problem for the researcher is 'knowing when to stop'. If research is understood in terms of a productive and continuous process, the decision of closing the sample is a contentious one. As Lennon (1996) has pointed out, it is questionable as to whether the attainment of redundancy of information is 'ultimately possible, given the idiosyncratic character of human nature' (Lennon, 1996: 103). It was

however intended that the participants selected represented a broad range of school music teaching contexts and professional backgrounds. Teachers were selected without taking into account age, gender, ethnicity or nationality. These personal characteristics fall beyond the scope of the study and were not included in the criteria for selection. The following are brief descriptions of each final participant, including their present musical and professional experiences. All names are changed for confidentiality purposes:

*Participant 1: Patrick*

Patrick is the Head of Music at a comprehensive inner-city school for girls. He undertakes class music teaching and manages the Music Department which currently has three full-time and two part-time classroom music teachers, twelve peripatetic instrumental teachers, a wind-band, orchestra and various choirs. The department is well resourced with instruments, six practice rooms, two big classrooms and a multipurpose hall. Patrick organises concerts every term, conducts the school orchestra and accompanies on the piano several students preparing for voice exams. He observes that he finds teaching ‘very creative and stimulating’ and that teaching is continually developing his musical skills (e.g. singing).

*Participant 2: Emma*

Emma is a school music teacher at a comprehensive inner-city school for girls. She has had a variety of jobs in the popular music business before going into teaching. While participating in this study, she is teaching three to four days a week in her school, conducting the school choirs, conducting a Youth Choir and a Primary Choir in a city borough, and running ‘vocal workshops all over the country for ages 7 – 90’

(Appendix VI, p. 424). She does some free-lance studio work, recording as background vocalist for pop bands. She sings, accompanying herself on the piano, and composes songs using the guitar.

*Participant 3: Laura*

Laura is the Head of Music at a large multicultural comprehensive inner-city school in an economically deprived area. She undertakes class music teaching and manages a relatively small Music Department, with currently another full-time teacher, three peripatetic instrumental teachers, and several choirs and 'music clubs' (Appendix V, interview question 36). The department has two classrooms on one floor and two practice rooms on a different floor, with a collection of percussion instruments and some keyboards. She has recently been on a music tour with youngsters and observes that creativity in her pupils is very much 'alive' ('travelling to South Africa...has been an eye opener. Creativity in youngsters is alive and prospering', Appendix VI, p. 424). She plays the piano and has a personal interest in composition using music technology.

*Participant 4: Helen*

Helen is a full-time music schoolteacher at a comprehensive school in a rural area. She is the youngest schoolteacher in the sample, having taught music in the classroom setting for two years at the time of this study. Her school has a separate building for music with two big classrooms, six practice rooms and a collection of electric and acoustic instruments. She is in charge of the school 'junk-band', woodwind and brass bands. She plays the flute and the recorder and teaches music

theory and flute at a local music school on Saturdays. She is currently planning to teach in South East Asia.

*Participant 5: Elaine*

Elaine is the Head of Music at a comprehensive school in a rural area. She undertakes class music teaching and manages the department, which has two more full-time teachers and about 10 peripatetic music teachers, as well as orchestra, brass band, junk-band, woodwind band and a number of choirs. The school has a separate building for the Music Department with practice rooms and a collection of electric and acoustic instruments. She plays the piano and observes that she feels 'pretty much' confident teaching composition activities in the classroom (Appendix V, interview question 50).

*Participant 6: Sarah*

Sarah is the Head of Music at a comprehensive school on the South coast of England. She was promoted to head of department at the start of the academic year prior to participating in this study. She undertakes class music teaching and manages the department, which currently has another full-time teacher and eight peripatetic instrumental teachers. They have two big classrooms, two practice rooms and a collection of instruments, including a large number of keyboards. She observes that her job is a constant source of inspiration. She plays the violin and the clarinet and teaches the latter to some individual students. At the time of the data collection she sings in two choirs and plays in one orchestra on a weekly basis, as well as undertaking occasional 'gig' work with a variety of choirs and orchestras. She has

some experience playing the clarinet within local jazz ensembles (Appendix V, questions 30 and 31).

To facilitate the observation of a wide range of teaching views from each participant, each teacher was observed for a minimum of three hours, focussing on their work with pupils aged 11 to 14 years. There is a broad variety of situations in which music teachers are working with activities involving pupils' creativity. Taking into account issues of time and resources, the intention in this study was to concentrate on a sample of secondary school music teachers only. In addition, as it has been pointed out in the opening chapter, the classroom observations were focussed on activities involving music **composition and improvisation**. While it has been observed in Chapter 3 that creativity may be manifested in many musical activities it was assumed that activities involving music composition and improvisation would best facilitate the revelation of teachers' views on creativity. Research literature suggested that teachers would associate creativity with 'composing' (e.g. Kratus, 1990; Reimer and Wright, 1992; Webster, 1996; Pitts, 1998). This point is emphasised in Chapter 6 when discussing the pilot.

A single researcher in a relatively small study could not follow all the teachers' work within the music curriculum during a complete academic year. It was necessary to decide how many lessons to videotape from each teacher. It was expected that by observing a minimum of three hours of teaching for each participant over a period of time of three to five weeks, activities at various stages of development would be encountered. The intention was to tape enough useful material for the interviews. While the focus would be on the teacher working on activities involving pupils'

creativity, the whole lessons were observed and videotaped because of the importance of being aware of and understanding the context.

Prospective participants were contacted initially by letter (Appendix I), giving them a general outline of the aims of the study. Those who accepted received, prior the investigation, more detailed information about the background of the study, the research techniques, the non-judgemental nature of the research and the researcher's background. The Head teacher of each school was informed by letter (Appendix II) before carrying out the school visits. Some practicalities regarding the dates and times for the interviews and the videotaping of lessons were personally discussed and agreed with each teacher during preliminary interviews and school visits. Preliminary school visits had to be arranged with each teacher, in order to 'gain access' and to be 'assimilated' into the corridors and staff rooms as a member of the school community, and not as an 'outsider' or one-day visitor.

During the preliminary interviews - which were not tape recorded - and after each school visit, the researcher wrote notes regarding the teacher's professional experience, the characteristics of the school settings, and any points raised by them that were thought to be of interest to further enquiry at a later stage. The intention throughout was to make clear to participants that the aim of the study was completely non-judgemental. The investigator expected to play the role of a tireless learner, trying to collect the views of the teachers and building a relationship of trust with them. To this end, participants were provided with information about the researcher's background as a student and teacher, with the aim of establishing common grounds in terms of shared interests and mutual acquaintances.

## **5.5 - Ethics and confidentiality**

It was explained to participants that classroom observations would be videotaped with the purpose of selecting extracts for a later interview, when they would comment on their own lessons. It was also noted that names of schools and teachers participating in the study would be changed for confidentiality purposes. In the interview transcripts and other documents enclosed at the end of the thesis, consideration is given to anonymity. Addresses and places are changed or deleted from all the letters, curriculum examples and additional materials. Brown and Dowling (1998: 65) suggest that even though “manipulation of settings is minimal in the collection of incidental or ‘found’ information, there are ethical considerations” which need to be addressed. This was achieved by ‘the exclusion of collateral information’ that would enable institutions and individuals to be identified.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) regard confidentiality as a way to protect the participants’ right of privacy. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) describe several techniques to display information without confidentiality being betrayed. These would include (a) deletion of identifiers, (b) ‘crude report’ of categories, for instance releasing general rather than specific information about participants, (c) ‘microaggregation’ or describing the ‘average person’ from several participants rather than releasing individual specific data such as age, and (d) ‘error inoculation’, or the introduction of some errors into the participants’ individual profile, while leaving the ‘average person’ description unchanged. In this study all the above techniques apart from the last have been used.



It was agreed with participants that the videotapes would not be included in the final report and should remain confidential. The focus of this research is on music teachers' perceptions of creativity as manifested during music activities. School descriptions are not considered in detail because this might lead to identification of the participants. In order to avoid unnecessary exposure of the teachers' opinions regarding other individuals, all names of pupils and other teachers appearing in the transcripts (Appendix III and V) have also been changed.

### **5.6 - Classroom observation**

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 235) observe that in successive phases of a qualitative investigation, after determining the focus of the enquiry, the researcher should adopt the posture of 'not knowing what is not known' in opposition to the conventional inquirer who usually knows 'what is not known'. In other words, the qualitative investigator does not go into research with predetermined ideas of what he or she is going to find out. This posture is similar to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call 'naturalistic' research because of the relevance of any potential issues arising during the exercise. While the original focus of the observations was on teachers' views on creativity through activities involving music composition and improvisation, the researcher was open to any observations participants wanted to make if they shed light on the aim of the study.

Teachers arranged their classrooms as they wished (i.e. activities and settings). The intention was to record the whole lesson each time, because of the importance of understanding the activities within the context. The camera was normally set in a

corner at the end of the classroom during whole class activities. Alternatively, during group activities, the camera would follow the teacher around trying to tape as much of the teacher and pupils' interaction as possible. However, one had to make choices on what to focus. The aim was to videotape what was taking place, so as to be able to consider the following questions:

- What **pupils** did the teacher regard as creative?
- What were their characteristics and attitudes?
- How was the appropriate **environment** for developing creativity considered by the teacher, including classroom settings, teaching methods, music programme and school culture?
- How did the teacher consider the creative **process** of their students?
- How was the assessment of creativity in the students' **products** carried out?
- What criteria were used in such evaluation?

After each lesson, in addition to the videotapes, the researcher noted any incidents that seemed significant and might require further attention when watching the tapes with participants. The classroom observations, nevertheless, should not be seen as ends in themselves but as a starting point. It is necessary to remember that the focus of the enquiry was on the teachers' own views of creativity; not on the lessons *per se* but on how participants talked about their lessons. The classroom observation was intended to identify attitudes and behaviours which appeared to frame teachers' views, in order to focus the interview themes.

In order to choose representative extracts upon which the teacher would be able to comment during later interviews, the extracts needed to represent a range of teacher activity and be of sufficient interest to stimulate reflection on the part of the interviewee. At least one of the excerpts from all participants focused on each of the following themes, drawn from the literature, showing parts of their lessons that reflected:

- a) **Pupils'** characteristics: personality traits of successful students, differences between pupils' attitudes and work.
- b) The **environment** for creativity: classroom and school settings, teaching methods.
- c) The creative **process**: activities structure, different stages in pupils' compositions and improvisations.
- a) Musical **products**: differences in pupils' outcomes, the evaluation of their work, the evaluation criteria.

The effectiveness of the interviews, thereafter, would partially depend on the potential of the excerpts to get participants talking about their views on creativity. In addition, teachers had the opportunity to validate the choice and to raise issues that might have been overlooked.

In order to test the reliability of this research design, three consecutive pilot trials were carried out before the final selection of participants. These pilots are described in more detail in the next chapter. They enabled the researcher, among other things, to check the efficacy of the video technique and to improve the criteria for selecting extracts for the interviews. It has not been possible to identify the use of this

technique in previous studies on teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education.

### **5.7 - The interviews: conversations with a purpose**

An examination of the literature on educational research reveals several terms used to describe different types of non-structured interviews. These include 'open ended', 'informant', 'unstructured' and 'non-directive' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Judging by the various levels of freedom given to the interviewee, the interviews of this study are characterised as 'semi-structured'. The conversations with teachers were different from one another and were characterised by open-ended questions. Participants were invited to comment on a selection of extracts from their videotaped lessons. A selection of twenty five to thirty minutes of video was edited for each participant. After each extract the teacher was invited to make comments, with questions such as 'what is your immediate response to this extract?' or 'would you try to describe what you were doing here?' Some of the questions focussed around inviting participants to describe each extract and encouraging them to clarify or elaborate issues they had raised. Other questions were stimulated by the teachers' responses or referred to something the teacher had done or said in the extract. The conversation was directed partially by the responses of the teacher, although where appropriate, the researcher tried to introduce questions of a more general nature concerning issues of creativity raised from the four-fold framework. The actual questions used are discussed in the next chapter.

Burgess (1988) examines different kinds of non-standardised interviews in educational settings, including different types of conversations (e.g. a chance encounter, a short conversation, a brief discussion, a long discussion) and physical contexts (e.g. classrooms, offices, the common room, the local pub). He concludes that all these conversations are thought to:

...provide an opportunity for teachers to talk about their work in their own words, using their own concepts rather than in an abstract way or in response to a set of staccato questions. (Burgess, 1988: 144)

Although the conversations held with participants during the agreed interviews were tape-recorded, and this is not the way conversations are normally carried out, the aim of these interviews was to concentrate on what Burgess calls 'conversations with a purpose', a phrase borrowed from Webb (1932: 130).

The main purpose, thus, was to give a voice to the teachers, to let them reflect in their own words, about the extracts selected from their teaching. It was intended to gain some insight into the meanings behind observed activities and teachers' behaviours, and to investigate the teachers' implicit theories and beliefs about creativity. In particular, the researcher looked at the explanations by participants about what took place during the lessons with composition and improvisation activities in terms of the creative pupil characteristics, environment (including pedagogical strategies involved), creative process and creative products. The intention was that the interviews would explain the 'why?' of the classroom activities, in reference to the 'what?', 'who?' and 'how?' recorded on video, and would also explain it by means of the teachers' own words.

During the interviews, the interviewer tried to exercise a catalyst role, first providing the extracts and later drawing attention to specific aspects of the videotaped lesson. A conversational style was used to allow teachers to feel relaxed and to encourage their responses, listening with attention and making new observations only when the teacher appeared to have nothing else to say. The complete transcripts of the interviews are enclosed at the end of the thesis (Appendix V).

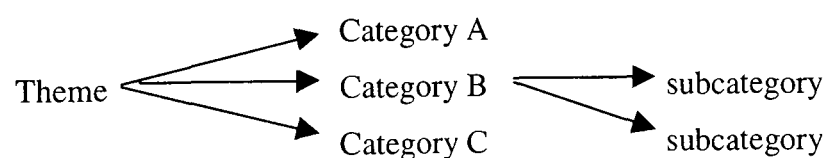
### **5.8 - Interpretation and analysis of data**

In this section issues concerning the transcriptions of the interviews and the methods of analysis and interpretation of data are considered. There appears to be a general consensus that tape-recorded interviews can be very useful, because the data is seen as accurate and they enable the researcher to keep track of the topics and themes that were covered in the interview. The main controversy appears to be the question of how to transcribe them. While some researchers transcribe using what might be called a 'film script' style stating more or less all the silences, hesitations, interjections, gestures, facial expressions, body postures, proximity of speakers and quality of voice, other academics use a more 'dry' style, transcribing the words only. It could be argued that with the former, the researcher uses his or her own interpretations of the facial expressions, voice and gestures, and that two different observers, as in any conversation, may well describe these details in a different way. On the other hand, with the latter 'dry' style the investigator could be losing vital information for the reader, presenting all conversations in a very similar way. Kvale (1996) and Block (2000) have recently examined issues on qualitative research

interviewing, considering the controversy surrounding the transcription and interpretation processes and other matters that would fall within the field of linguistic studies and discourse analysis, but beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to take the issue of interview transcription and accuracy into consideration when planning a research project. It might be argued that interpretation of the data in qualitative research starts with the transcriptions of the interviews and not after. Powney and Watts (1987: 152) note that ‘the level of detail of the transcript is clearly shaped by the needs of the research’. Therefore, considering the purpose of this study focussing on the teachers’ theories and beliefs, rather than on the manner in which they were articulated, facial expressions, postures, gestures and short pauses are not described in the transcripts. Interjections, mannerisms and repeated phrases which do not appear to add anything to the body of the conversation are omitted too. In doing this, it is hoped that the meaning of what the teacher said will be more directly accessible to the reader. As noted earlier, all participants were assigned a pseudonym to be used in the interview transcripts and in the quotations included throughout the chapters of Part Three, ‘Description and analysis of findings’.

Presenting videotaped extracts as a starting point, as explained in section 6 of this chapter, facilitated gathering data on the four original main themes (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product). Later on, the teachers’ voice from the transcripts was analysed through this four-fold framework. The aim of this was not to test this framework but to interpret the emerging issues in a consistent way. The framework was ‘the glass’ used to look into the data. The researcher was, nevertheless, open to the incorporation of any new theme that emerged from the interviews. Five sequential steps were followed in the analysis of the interviews: a) first each

transcript was read to get a sense of the whole; b) in a second reading, the teachers ideas, as expressed in their responses, were coded – i.e. piled into groups - under the four broad original themes; at this stage their ideas were coded in long paragraphs, what Kvale (1996:194) calls ‘natural meaning units’; c) the issues that dominated each ‘natural meaning unit’ were labelled, generating what are called **categories**. In other words, category is a label that includes different perceptions by one or more teachers, which are grouped together because they deal with the same issue; d) a further process of data reduction, producing new categories and subcategories under each of the main themes was carried out; e) each category and subcategory was looked for and compared against the whole set of transcripts. This process is similar to the analysis procedure developed by Cooper and McIntyre (1993: 384) called ‘recursive comparative analysis’ because the categorisation of the data was continually ‘tested and refined’, repeating the above process until all the categories were compared against all the teachers’ responses. Axial coding, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 123), was used ‘to relate categories to their subcategories’ as coding occurred around the axis of each theme (Pupil, Environment, Process, Product):



The final categories are presented in chapters 7 and 8, where they are used for the purpose of answering the first research question – *What are these schoolteachers’ perceptions of creativity?* In Part Three the approach to analysis and discussion of data attempts not only to give voice to the teachers’ interpretations and ‘theories’, but



also to consider the outcomes and emerging issues in the context of the general framework. When appropriate, as many quotations from the transcripts as necessary are introduced, to give the reader a fair view of the teachers' reflections on their own conceptualisation of creativity in music education.

An effort was made to ensure that the analysis of data was reliable and valid. Discussing content analysis procedures, Krippendorff (1980) and Weber (1990) consider reliability in the analysis of interviews with regard to stability and reproducibility. Stability refers to the extent to which categories are invariant over time and can be determined when the same text is coded more than once by the researcher. In order to check the stability of the analysis, three months and six months after the initial categorisation of the data, randomly selected parts of the original interviews were recoded. When compared with the initial categorisation no major differences emerged.

The second kind of reliability is reproducibility. This refers to the extent to which the analysis produces similar results when the same interview is coded by more than one researcher. To satisfy that the categories' definitions were clearly formulated (see summary of categories in Appendix IV), randomly selected parts of the categorised interviews were read by two postgraduate students and discussed separately with them, in addition to the project supervisor. This process assisted the researcher in naming the categories concisely, defining their contents and reorganising some categories and subcategories that were subsequently merged with other categories.

Kvale (1996) raises the issue of transcription reliability. In this particular case since the researcher's first language is not English, this issue is also pertinent. To establish this reliability a native English speaker corrected the transcripts of the interviews - which were all originally transcribed by the researcher - listening to the audiotapes and refining any misunderstandings. A second English speaker scrutinized the refined version, verifying the final text included in Appendix V.

In qualitative analysis no statistical tests of validity can be employed. In general, it is claimed that a study is valid when it has managed to investigate what it was supposed to. Validity in this type of enquiry can be claimed on the basis of a number of factors, some of which have been considered in previous sections. For instance all participants were volunteers. Since not every teacher may have felt comfortable discussing her/his views on musical creativity, the selection of teachers on a voluntary basis was expected to discourage any possible misleading responses. In addition, the interviews were carried out in the form of what Burgess (1988) describes as a dialogue, in order for the researcher to understand the information provided by the teachers. This is thought to lead to a greater accuracy of meaning and provides validity, since the interviewee is given the opportunity of clarifying his or her views during the interview and throughout the research process. In fact, the researcher kept in contact with participants after the final interview in order to validate exact expressions and ambiguous points.

The software program NVivo (revision 1.1) was used to assist with the coding of the transcripts. NVivo is the latest version of NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising), a program for computer assisted

qualitative data analysis developed by the company QSR International. The advantages and disadvantages of using computers in qualitative research have been largely discussed within the Social Sciences arena. Fielding and Lee (1998) give three main reasons for using computers in qualitative research. One reason is that the machine can facilitate the task of data management. Decreasing the amount of time devoted to managing data makes the analysis process less tiresome. A second justification is that computers extend the capabilities of qualitative research. For example they allow replication, i.e. that a second person can replicate an existing analysis of the data. This possibility is almost impracticable in the case of traditional qualitative techniques of data analysis. The third justification suggested by Fielding and Lee is that software use can enhance credibility and acceptability of qualitative research:

Social researchers of all kinds in the UK have for some years faced sustained pressure to deliver research findings in a comprehensive and timely manner... One justification for software use is that, by offering efficiencies and the possibility of more sophisticated analysis, it gives the qualitative researcher some leverage in dealing with such pressures. (Fielding and Lee, 1998: 57-58)

Computers can help researchers to manage large amounts of data and enable the researchers to easily re-code their data. This facilitates other researchers, tutors or external observers to discuss coding and analysis issues. The use of qualitative software for coding interview transcripts saves large amounts of time and paper produced by 'cut and paste' each time an important change in the coding is made.

Because computers shorten considerably the time spent in the coding and analysis of interviews, it might be argued that they can produce under analysed reports. The

coding and analysis process, however, can be double-checked by a third party with the programme NVivo. Unfortunately, the production of under analysed reports with computer software methods is not an exclusive dilemma of qualitative research. Sometimes the findings of quantitative studies are supported by statistical results quickly produced with computer software programmes, such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), but a deep analysis of the findings is not included in the report conclusions. It is apparent that computers help to do faster and better what could be done without computers. In addition, they take qualitative research a step further enabling individuals to replicate the analysis of data and to discuss coding issues, working in teams if necessary.

In using computers for qualitative enquiry the researchers are still in charge of building up the analysis, having the ideas, engaging with the data and making all the decisions about their study. Gahan and Hannibal (1998) illustrate some fictitious desires and fears that researchers have when starting using computer analysis in qualitative studies:

Some researchers harbour a secret desire that...the computer will distinguish the important bits and then make all the links between these bits. For another group of researchers, it is the underlying fear and anxiety that the computer will indeed take over the data and do things to it! (Gahan and Hannibal, 1998: 1)

NVivo is one of the software tools available to assist individuals who are engaged in qualitative research processes. In fact, it is a kit of tools containing three different databases: one to manage the documents containing the data, another to manage the attributes given to the documents and a third one to manage the codes given to the data. Usual tasks in qualitative research like data recording, storage and coding are

handled in NVivo by input into these three databases. It is possible to import text from any word processor (in rich text format) and to code the text using virtual coloured pens on the computer screen. The programme also allows the researcher to reorganise the data relatively simply and quickly. Codes can be split and merged, duplicated or deleted. Categories can be created from data during coding, at any stage of the research project and can be organised as part of a tree or be positioned as a free theme and later moved into a tree. The researcher can also type ideas and these ideas can be stored in a memo or within any theme. The programme includes a search engine to look for words and phrases across all documents. Later on, it is possible to retrieve the information stored in the categories with several different options, facilitating the analysis of data. The advantages of NVivo, in comparison with the other computer programmes on qualitative analysis available on the market (e.g. ATLAS™, ETNOGRAPH™) are that NVivo incorporates almost any valuable feature of all its predecessors. At the same time, having a friendly windows interface, the researcher is free to choose the amount of features that s/he wishes to use, making the utilisation of the software as complex or simple as the researcher needs.

## **5.9 – Summary**

Guba and Lincoln's (1982) 'naturalistic' approach to educational research has been used to explain the assumptions regarding the nature of reality underpinning this study. It is explained that the intention of the enquiry was to make the music teachers' attitudes to creativity more understandable rather than provide prescriptions for practice. As suggested by Eisner (1981, 1991) this type of research is not concerned with the discovery of truth but with the formation of meaning. To this aim

six secondary school music teachers with a variety of backgrounds in a range of locations were selected following what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call 'purposive' sampling approach. Participants were interviewed after being presented with extracts of their own lessons on videotape, containing activities involving composition and improvisation. The extracts were selected following the four themes (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product) as outlined in Part One. Participants were asked to comment on each video extract. This technique helped to draw out and put into context the concepts of the teachers. The interviews were carried out in the form of what Burgess (1988) describes as a dialogue 'with a purpose'. The final interviews were transcribed and analysed, looking for the teachers' voice regarding the four original themes. The transcripts were coded using the computer programme NVivo. The categories that emerged from this process are presented and discussed in Part Three.

In the next chapter the pilot studies are explained in detail and their influence in shaping the methodology of this enquiry is considered.

# CHAPTER 6

## PILOT STUDIES

## CHAPTER 6. PILOT STUDIES

### 6.1 – Introduction

In order to test the methodology a number of pilots with secondary school music teachers were carried out prior to the main investigation. This enabled the researcher to refine the techniques of data gathering, as well as to become familiarised with the technical equipment (video camera and video editing machine) and the tools for the analysis of data (NVivo). The theoretical framework outlined in Part One (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product) was used to analyse the pilot interviews. Putting both the techniques and the theoretical framework in action was a way of becoming aware of some of their limitations. This practical knowledge was taken into account when setting the final research design for the main enquiry. One of the points arising from these pilot studies was that, when interviewing, it would be sometimes necessary to redirect the conversation into the main aim of the enquiry. The interviews should not be mere conversations, but ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1988). This helped to clarify the teachers’ views and the gathering of relevant information. Other issues arising from the pilot studies were the timing and length of the interviews, the format of the video extracts, and the gathering of information regarding the teachers’ musical backgrounds. In the following sections consideration is given to how the pilot studies shaped the methods used in the main investigation (section 3), and how the four-fold framework was used in the analysis of the pilot interviews (section 4).



## **6.2 - Description of the pilots**

During the last term of the academic year 1999-2000 and the first term of 2000-2001 three pilot studies were carried out in three English secondary schools. The participants involved were experienced specialist music teachers, who were selected following the guidelines of the maximum variation sampling approach explained in Chapter 5 (section 4). They taught in the Music Departments of one middle size and two large size comprehensive schools. These schools had markedly different characteristics. One was mixed gender, another was boys only and the third a girls only. One had a religious orientation. Two were in the London area and one in a rural county.

Different research approaches were tried in each pilot study with the purpose of finding out the methodology most appropriate for the main investigation. These different approaches included videotaping lessons with the same class in consecutive school visits and with various classes during a single day. A range of interview arrangements was also tested, including the use of a different number of video extracts with shorter or longer lengths, and different interviewing times. The interviews also varied from pilot to pilot, including non-structured, and different degrees of semi-structured interview planning. Table 6.1 next page summarises the research approach of the pilots.

*Table 6.1 The pilot studies*

PILOTS	1 – John	2 – Mary	3 – Eva
TERM	Summer Term 1999-2000	Autumn Term 2000-2001	Autumn Term 2000-2001
CLASSES AND LESSONS OBSERVED	<p>Year 9</p> <p>1 workshop within a Pop song composition project</p> <p>Year 7</p> <p>1 lesson on introduction to Blues and improvisation</p>	<p>Year 7</p> <p>1 lesson (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) of a Unit on song composition based on African rhythms</p>	<p>Year 8</p> <p>2 lessons (the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) of a Unit in melody making</p>
INTERVIEW	45 minutes (including 23 min. of video extracts)	60 minutes (including 30 min. of video extracts)	50 minutes (including 31 min. of video extracts)

### **6.3 - How the pilots shaped the methods and methodology**

The pilot with the first teacher showed clearly the difficulty of reducing the videotaped lessons from real time to a few extracts easily manageable within a normal interview time schedule. If the extracts were too long or too many, both the interviewer and the interviewee would be spending too much time viewing the tape, time that could otherwise be used for conducting the interview. In addition, the extracts needed to represent a range of teacher activity and be sufficiently interesting to stimulate reflection on the part of the teacher. For these reasons they had to last no more than six or seven minutes each, but be relatively complete within themselves. After the pilots, it was decided that five or six extracts (or alternatively a larger number of shorter extracts) totalling between twenty-five to thirty minutes were the most appropriate to serve as a basis for discussion with participants. It became apparent that one or two lessons would not be enough to get illustrative videotaped extracts focussing on the four themes of the framework. A minimum of three hours of 'raw' taped lessons would be needed for each teacher in order to facilitate the video editing. For instance, it would be more likely to gain an overall view of a composition project by observing one lesson at the beginning, one lesson half way through the project and one lesson at the end.

Another technical issue arising from the pilot studies was the minimum length for the interviews. Because a half hour tape of extracts would be used with participants in the main study, no less than 90 minutes would be needed for each interview, including around 60 minutes of conversation plus 30 minutes of video watching. Due to the amount of time required, the interviews had to be set in a place and occasion

suitable for each teacher. Participants had to be free after the interview, or not to be worried about what they were doing next.

During the interviews the teacher and the interviewer watched the extracts, stopping the video after each one, so that the teachers could comment on the creative pupils, the environment for creativity, the creative process and the creative product (as described in Chapter 5, sections 3 and 6). It was realised that, if participants talked about issues clearly beyond the scope of the enquiry, it would be sometimes necessary to redirect the conversation to the main aim of the investigation. In view of this, it was decided to devise an additional set of questions of a more general nature concerning issues regarding creativity. This would help to clarify the teachers' perceptions, reaching further into their ideas, and would help in gathering relevant information. These questions, which were raised from the four themes of the framework, would be used if needed, only to redirect the conversation. The following were considered with participants of the pilots after watching videotaped extracts of their lessons:

(a) Regarding the pupil theme,

- Are some of your pupils more creative than others in the same classroom? If yes, how would you describe them?

(b) In reference to the environment,

- When you teach composition/improvisation do you consider any specific classroom setting to work with? Does the classroom setting matter?
- Does the physical environment influence pupils' outcomes? If yes, how?
- How do you motivate your pupils when working with creativity?

(c) Regarding the creative process,

- Do the students follow some defined processes when composing? If yes, would you describe their compositional processes? Is the process different between pupils?
- Do you follow some process to teach composition?

(d) In reference to the product,

- What is your definition of creativity?
- How do you evaluate creativity in a pupil's work?

These questions were adjusted to the particular classroom context of the video extracts. Some of the questions were modified and introduced in different stages of the interviews, depending on the teachers and the flow of the conversation. Further issues were also discussed during the interviews surrounding the National Curriculum, the teachers' role, and their own confidence when working with composition and improvisation. The following questions originated from the school visits, informal conversations with teachers in the Music Departments, and classroom observations:

- Would you try to describe your role as a teacher, with the pupils and their compositions in this unit?
- Do you feel confident with these kind of activities?
- Would you describe yourself as creative?
- Did you have specific training in composition and improvisation in your career?

The experience accumulated carrying out the pilots was taken into account when interviewing the six teachers in the main study, and the above questions were used in the same way.

Additionally, the research design was modified after the pilot studies in regard to the third research question, *C) In what ways do these teachers' musical and professional experiences influence their perceptions of creativity?* The intention in this question was to compare the teachers' perceptions - elicited during the interviews using video extracts of lessons - with their musical and professional backgrounds. The ultimate aim was to explore to what extent their experiences influenced their perceptions. The videotaped lessons, nevertheless, appeared to have little to do with the teachers' past musical and professional experiences, and participants were not enticed to talk about their life history after watching the extracts. The video technique had either to be complemented with another research technique, or additional questions had to be specifically asked regarding these issues during the interviews. As it was necessary to gather this information without spending too much of the interview time, another way of finding out about the teachers' background was therefore looked for. It was decided to ask teachers to complete a 'Musical Career Path' sheet, derived from Denicolo and Pope (1990). Using an undulating path drawn on a single sheet teachers were asked to think back over their life experience and reflect on specific instances, or critical incidents which they considered had influenced the direction of their musical life. These included experiences with their studies, music making and teaching. The Music Career Path sheets of the teachers are enclosed in Appendix VI (p. 424).

Having a single sheet facilitated the selection of critical incidents by the same participants. No instructions were given about when in their lives to start. For the main study, it was decided to give the Musical Career Path sheet to teachers during

the first school visit and to ask them to complete it on time for the final interview. In doing this it was expected to have valuable information for further questioning during the interviews if needed.

The use of this technique, called 'Critical Incident Charting' (Denicolo and Pope, 1990), is illustrated in a study of personal constructions of life events of a group of prospective teachers. The same technique has been used recently by Burnard (2000) to research how music students ascribe meaning to improvisation and composition. As far as the researcher is aware, it has not previously been used as a research tool with music teachers. The importance of the study of the life events of teachers has been pointed out by Goodson (1992) and Goodson and Sikes (2001). The latter suggests that in recent years 'life history' has become increasingly popular with researchers investigating educational topics of all kinds, including teachers' perceptions of different areas of their careers and pedagogical practice. The intention is to examine how individuals perceive and describe their experiences and social contexts:

In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is. (Goodson, 1992: 234)

Goodson (1983: 152) suggests that ethnographical methodology, more often than not, neglects 'biography by concentrating on the occasion or the event, most notably the school lesson'. He further maintains that researchers need to explore 'elements of individual difference and change through personal biography', studying the evolving background of the teachers' professional lives.

#### **6.4 - The teachers' voice from the pilot interviews**

The experience gained from the pilot interviews was important for refining the methodology of the study. Different research approaches were used in each pilot. The first and second pilot studies were more of an exploratory nature. The research design of the third pilot was similar to the one used with participants in the main enquiry, but the interview was shorter.

As pointed out in Chapter 5 (section 8), the software programme NVivo was used as a tool in the analysis of data. The software assisted in handling the analysis in two different ways: firstly, for looking deeply into each individual transcript, coding and re-coding ideas; secondly, for comparing ideas and codes between the three interviews. The four-fold framework developed in Part One was used as a 'glass' to look into the transcripts. The intention was to see if it was possible to interpret the emerging issues in a consistent way. Presenting videotaped extracts focussed on the pupil, the environment, the process and the product (as described in the previous chapter, section 6), facilitated the subsequent coding of data under these four broad themes.

References coded under 'Pupil' included teachers' comments on creative pupils and descriptions of students' attitudes. Comments on the classroom settings, teaching methods, curriculum and school culture were included under the 'Environment' theme. The 'Process' theme included statements about the different stages in pupils' compositions, as well as the general stages of the activities observed. Statements categorised as 'Product' included those referring to the teachers' descriptions of



student's work, as well as any other references to the criteria used for their assessment. Some statements fell into two themes, for example 'Product' and 'Pupil'. A teacher working in a song composition unit based on African rhythms, explained the meaning of creativity giving the following example of creative pupils:

They try their best to find...the rhythm that's interesting, and not just may be one bit repeating all the way through. (Mary, Appendix III)

In such cases the relationship was noted and categorised according to the context of the conversation and whether the statement was concerned more with the evaluation of musical products rather than pupils' characteristics. A further process of data reduction was carried out, producing categories under each of the main themes. These categories were drawn from the interviews. Some of the categories within the 'Pupil' theme were 'adaptor pupils' ('they work much better if you give them a structure to work with', Eva, Appendix III) and 'innovator pupils'. Other categories within the 'Product' theme focussed on originality and musical style.

The participants' comments during the interviews drew attention to many of the issues addressed in the literature on creativity. They referred to matters such as creative pupils and the assessment of pupils' products, the emotional environment, the intrinsic motivation of the students and the process of composing. The teachers' explanations of their own teaching provided insights into their perceptions of creativity, in relation to the four themes of the framework. Their perceptions seem to support the idea of creativity as a capacity of all students, a view previously suggested in the literature. Given the length of the pilot interviews, the data analysis from the pilot studies is not discussed further. These preliminary studies,

nevertheless, exemplified the complexities in defining the term 'creativity', pointing to a need for further research. The trends and issues suggested here are further explored in Part Three to see how they stand in relation to the data from the six final participating teachers.

## **6.5 – Summary**

Three pilot studies were carried out prior to the main investigation in order to test the methodology. Participants were selected following what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call a 'maximum variation' sampling method. Different research approaches, summarised in Table 6.1, were tried in each pilot with the intention of finding the methodology most appropriate for the main investigation. Issues arising from the pilots that have been considered in this chapter include: interview questioning, timing and length of the interviews, the format of the video extracts, and the gathering of information regarding the teachers' backgrounds. An additional set of questions, raised from the four themes of the framework (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product), was devised. These questions were used only to redirect the conversation, when participants talked about issues beyond the scope of the enquiry.

In order to gather information regarding the teachers' musical and professional backgrounds without spending too much of the interview time, it was decided to ask teachers to complete a 'Musical Career Path' sheet, derived from Denicolo and Pope (1990). In line with Goodson (1983, 1992), the importance of studying the life histories of teachers to understand their individual differences has been outlined. The use of the four-fold framework and the programme NVivo during the analysis of the

pilot interviews has been explained. This analysis, nevertheless, is not included in the discussion of the main investigation in Part Three due to the variety of research approaches tested. The experience gained from the pilots enabled the researcher to establish the research methodology satisfactorily.

## CONCLUSIONS OF PART TWO

Taking into account the scope of the research questions and the results of previous studies examined in Part One, it is suggested in Chapter 5 that a qualitative approach is the most appropriate for this particular study. Guba and Lincoln's (1982) differentiation between quantitative and qualitative research frameworks is used to describe the methodological assumptions of the researcher. In line with Eisner (1981, 1991) it is observed that this study is concerned with the formation of meaning rather than with the discovery of truth. The stress on the **particular** and the provision of **explicit experience** is important in the context of this enquiry, which seeks to make the music teachers' perceptions of creativity more understandable, rather than provide prescriptions for practice.

Six teachers from English schools working in different socio-geographical situations were selected, adopting Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'maximum variation sampling' approach. Between three to six hours of lessons and school activities, including composition and improvisation with pupils 11-14 years of age, were videotaped for each teacher. Thirty minutes of short extracts were selected from these lessons by the researcher, and used as a basis for discussion with participants during the final in-depth semi-structured interviews. The structure of the interviews was provided by the

lessons' extracts, which were focussed on the four themes of the theoretical framework (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product). The conversations with teachers were characterised by open-ended questions and can be described, borrowing Burgess (1988) words, as 'conversations with a purpose'. Interviews were transcribed in full and are attached in Appendix V. Consideration has been given in Chapter 5 to issues regarding research ethics and the confidentiality of participants. The software programme NVivo was used to assist with the coding of the transcripts. Issues surrounding the interpretation and analysis of data and the use of software in qualitative research have also been examined.

Prior to the main enquiry this methodology was tested in three consecutive pilot studies, discussed in Chapter 6. The experience gained from the pilots enabled the researcher to refine the methods of gathering data concerning the teachers' backgrounds and the interviewing techniques, establishing the research design satisfactorily. The four-fold framework developed in Part One was used in the analysis of the pilot interviews and proved of value in interpreting the emerging issues in a consistent way. The teachers' comments drew attention to many of the issues addressed in the literature review, regarding the four themes of the framework. They referred to matters such as originality, assessment of pupils' creativity, the environment for creativity, the motivation of the students and the process of composing. The analysis, nevertheless, has not been taken further given the length and exploratory nature of the pilot studies. In the discussion of the data from the main enquiry, the intention is to seek for confirmation and isolation of the trends and issues suggested here.

In Part Three the findings of the main study are discussed. The three research questions presented in the first chapter are considered in chapters 7 to 10.

***PART THREE:***

***DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS AND***

***DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS***

# CHAPTER 7

## THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

## CHAPTER 7. THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

### 7.1 - Introduction

Chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to an examination of the meanings attached to the word creativity by the teachers in the study, with the aim to explore the first research question: *What are these schoolteachers' perceptions of creativity?* The description of the categories that originated from the analysis of data, as explained in Part Two, has been split over two chapters. The focus in this chapter is on the categories related to conceptual issues in creativity. Chapter 8 explores the teachers' perceptions of practical issues regarding the teaching of composition and improvisation. Inevitably the teachers' work (i.e. teaching music) is part of their discourse, and it would be impossible to separate completely their perception of creativity from their comments regarding teaching. Consequently, there is to some extent an overlap between this and the following chapter.

The teachers are not referred to as 'subjects', but as 'participants'. In order to give a full account of the participants' views, quotations by teachers are inserted throughout in the text. At the end of each quotation reference is made to the interview question from which the comment arises. In the transcripts, all participants' answers are numbered to facilitate the location of the quotations. For the purpose of clarity, the teachers' comments included in this and subsequent chapters have been edited of repetitions and mannerisms that were not adding anything to the participants'



meanings. The full verbatim transcripts of the interviews are enclosed in Appendix V (p. 339).

The intention is not to explain each one of the categories and subcategories in the same order they originated during the analysis of the data, but to make sense of the teachers' perceptions of creativity. An 87.2% of the interview transcripts (236,636 characters from a total of 271,438) were categorised in the analysis. The remaining 12.8 % are the interviewer questions, and the teachers' repetitions and mannerisms that were not adding anything to their ideas. The aim is to interpret the emerging issues in a consistent way, rather than looking for the generalisation of a theory. As noted in earlier chapters, Guba and Lincoln (1982) have drawn attention to the argument that in this type of enquiry, generalisations are not the prime focus since the cases under scrutiny – in this case the six teachers participating in the study - are neither context nor time free. Transferability of the researcher explanations, if any, is drawn by the readers of the research report. The point was made in Chapter 5 in discussing methodological issues, that readers of 'naturalistic' research make their own connections in the light of their experience, depending on the degree of contextual similarity. Eisner (1981) noted that qualitative research is concerned with the formation of meaning, rather than with the discovery of truth, and that 'particulars exemplify more than they describe directly' (1991: 38). Adelman, Kemmis and Jenkins (1976: 143) observed that in such research, when attention is given to a particular case, the meanings presented in the report are likely to become apparent by 'the shock of recognition'. It has already been pointed out (p. 95) that the stress on the particular and the provision of explicit experience is important in the context of this study, which seeks to make the participants' perceptions of creativity

more understandable, illuminating some of the complexities of this concept rather than providing prescriptions for practice.

## **7.2 - Teachers' perceptions. Some general observations**

The transcripts of the teachers' interviews were coded under thirty-three categories and subcategories. Twenty-eight of these originated from the participants' comments around issues related to the original framework. These are directly connected with the research questions and are analysed over the following four chapters. Two categories are focused on the music curriculum and the statutory guidelines and are discussed in Part Four, Chapter 11. The remaining three categories are concerned with methodological issues (i.e. 'Video reactions', 'Teachers self-criticism' and 'Research process evaluation'). These are not directly related to the research questions but to the teachers' evaluation of the research process, and will be further considered in the second section of the final chapter, 'Further methodological issues'. A summary description of all categories is included in Appendix IV (p. 334).

Table 7.1, next page, shows the list of categories and subcategories. The term 'node' is used instead of category, since this is the terminology of the software program NVivo. 'Subcategory' is referred to as 'child node'. These 33 nodes originated from the coding of the interviews of teachers. Comments from the participants relate to the original four-fold framework.

**Table 7.1 List of categories and subcategories**

Node listing:

**GENERAL ISSUES**

- 1 (1.1) General comments
- 2 (1.2) New concept
- 3 (1.3) Traditional concept
- 4 (1.4) Unclear definition
- 5 (1.5) Teachers' own creativity

**PUPIL THEME**

- 6 (2.1) Personal characteristics
- 7 (2.2) Individual learning
- 8 (2.2.1) Adaptor pupils
- 9 (2.2.2) Innovator pupils
- 10 (2.3) Home background

**ENVIRONMENT THEME**

- 11 (3.1) Emotional environment
- 12 (3.1.1) Motivation
- 13 (3.1.2) School culture
- 14 (3.1.3) Teachers' role
- 15 (3.1.4) Teaching methods
- 16 (3.1.5) Time requirements
- 17 (3.2) Physical environment
- 18 (3.2.1) Complaints and proposals for improvement
- 19 (3.2.2) Classroom settings

**PROCESS THEME**

- 20 (4.1) General comments
- 21 (4.2) Different activities
- 22 (4.3) Group process
- 23 (4.4) Improvisation-Composition
- 24 (4.5) Structured process
- 25 (4.6) Unstructured process

**PRODUCT THEME**

- 26 (5.1) Assessment
- 27 (5.2) Originality
- 28 (5.3) Music style and conventions

**CURRICULUM ISSUES**

- 29 (6.1) Music Curriculum
- 30 (6.2) National Curriculum

**METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

- 31 (7.1) Video reactions
- 32 (7.2) Teachers self-criticism
- 33 (7.3) Research process evaluation

There are several issues that did not fit into the four themes, but which nevertheless are of importance to music educators and of significance within the context of this enquiry. It becomes apparent from the interview transcripts that the conceptual definition of creativity needs to be considered, before moving into the four themes of the framework. In the second section of Chapter 2, the 'traditional' and 'new' concepts of creativity were examined. It was observed that the new concept is related to the term 'imaginative thinking', where creativity is imagination successfully displayed in any valued pursuit. The views of the six teachers participating in the study seemed to exemplify this idea. They perceived creativity, although in different ways, as a capacity of all students. For example one of the teachers, after watching some videotaped extracts of her lessons on a Pop song composition Project, observed that all pupils were 'capable of producing a fine pop song' (Emma, Appendix V, question 65). This idea implied creativity as 'personal originality' (e.g. Sarah, Appendix V, question 26), something that was new for the individual but not necessarily innovative in a wider social context.

Even though the six teachers considered that creativity could be developed in all pupils, they did not agree on how this creativity was to be described. Three of the six participants did not have a clear perception of the concept and were aware of its complexity. One participant observed that she had 'no idea' whether she was teaching creativity or not (Elaine, Appendix V, question 21). When invited to provide an account of creativity, these teachers were significantly aware of the difficulty of doing so. Sarah for example, observed that there was 'a lot' she did not know about creativity (Appendix V, question 63). Two teachers pointed out that the music guidelines of the National Curriculum were not free of this conceptual

confusion when defining the levels of attainment and the requirements to be taught to pupils (e.g. Sarah, Appendix V, question 65).

Participants commented not only about pupils' creativity but about their own creativity as well. These comments were grouped under the category "Teachers' own creativity". This category was left outside the general four-fold framework as it is focussed on the teachers' perceptions of their own teaching and music-making skills. The issues under this category are of great importance, and they are therefore outlined separately in section 7 of this chapter.

Even if the teachers did not always have a thorough awareness or clear understanding of the concept of creativity, they did express interesting and illuminating views about creative pupils, the environment for creativity, the creative process and the creative product. Each of the following sections relates to Table 7.1 (p. 143), but at this point in the thesis, only deals with selected elements. Others will be reviewed in Chapter 8. As explained in the introduction, depending on the nature of the issues considered in each category they are disclosed in this or the next chapter, which is focussed on categories that are more related to practical issues regarding the teaching of composition and improvisation in the classroom.

### **7.3 - Teachers' comments on creative pupils**

In this section the categories 'Personal characteristics' and 'Home background', from the 'Pupil' theme of the framework, are examined. As indicated in the methodology (Chapter 5, section 6) teachers and pupils were videotaped during the observation of

classroom music lessons. During later interviews, the teachers were asked to comment on some extracts of their lessons. These were focussed, amongst other themes, on pupils completing the tasks in different ways and achieving different results. For example, some extracts were concentrated on the pupils who completed the music activities at what appeared to be an easier pace, and higher standard than their peers. On other occasions, the extracts were focussed on pupils trying hard to achieve the musical result they were looking for.

When asked if they saw common characteristics between the most creative students, all teachers noted that creative students would generally try to incorporate their own ideas into the music lesson, developing the initial input of the teacher with their own input. Helen, commenting on one video extract with some of her Year 7 pupils working in practice rooms, put it as follows:

The more creative ones will try and change what they've done....They come up with ideas and develop them further...looking for something specific in what they are playing, whereas some students will just go in and hit any notes, and whatever comes out they'll say 'oh well I've done that'. (Pupils were to compose the solo parts of a Rondo with a given melody for the 'A' part. Helen. Appendix V. Question 24)

Elaine, after watching an extract with a pair of Year 9 students during a unit on Jazz and Blues, observed:

They had done some ideas for themselves...and they'd responded to advice that I gave them, and tried to incorporate it into their own improvisation....They were very 'on task'...practising hard and using the time. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 19)

The same teacher, later during that interview, made the following remarks:

The most exceptional students will always adapt the task in a more individual way, they always will manage to do what I've asked them to do, but add on something...in a way which makes it individual to them. So they kind of stamp a personal mark on it. They are the most exceptional....of whom there may only be three or four in the whole year group. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 25 and 35)

Emma observed that not all cases were similar. During the interview it was suggested by the researcher that creative students might be 'the best students', displaying common characteristics. However, Emma came up with the following remarks:

There are so many ways of being creative...there are the kids who are very extrovert, who tend to get into trouble in lots of places within the curriculum...[they] are very creative and what happens in a very formal music background is that they...get bored...and...creativity doesn't really get a place to flourish....And those are certainly the kids that I have my eye on because I know I was a bit like that myself...but then I am not having anything against the kids who are very creative and introvert as well... So I would say that there are two types of creative personality, there's the extrovert, there's the introvert and they both have to be nurtured...And it's very easy to miss one group either way. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 35)

This example of different ways of being creative does not support the rather narrow description of creative pupils provided in the literature. This issue is examined in more detail in the third section of Chapter 9. In the above quotation, Emma is suggesting the existence of at least two different types of creative pupils, the 'introverted' and the 'extroverted' types. The idea of different types of pupils is related with the issue of 'individual learning'. Emma offered the following description of an 'extrovert' type of creative pupil:

She just has the most incredible energy, which is...very magnetic....The only problem with her energy is that if she is negative she'll pull lots of people with her. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 36)

If we have different pupils with different styles of learning, it may be that some music activities designed for the whole class do not serve the purpose of achieving a general positive outcome for all students. This issue is further considered in Chapter 9.

Some other characteristics of creative pupils suggested by the teachers were that they were able to pick 'the ideas quickly' (Helen, Appendix V, question 11), and able to practise hard and 'use the time' and be 'confident about playing' (e.g. Sarah, Appendix V, question 37). Sarah made the latter point quite strongly, after watching several of her pupils playing their own tunes in front of their classmates as part of a Blues project. She commented on one of them:

He's very confident...[and] independent, because he came up with a chord sequence that he liked...akin to what I'd given them in terms of blue series, but he was confident to stick to what he'd done, and to him it sounded right and therefore he played that. So, that independence could be seen as an element of creativity. But obviously technique was quite secure, and the confidence was there, and...I'm beginning to think that that's something which is quintessential for showing creativity, if not for it actually existing...I think his confidence goes beyond the need to stick within the pattern that he was given. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 52)

And she said of two other pupils:

[She] used the same three notes all the way through... But again she is very musically confident, she is a very good singer...and quite a strong character...The fact that she...stuck to that all the way through it made it work.... And again, the last



girl who played was very confident. Not arrogantly so, but...quite self-assured.  
(Sarah. Appendix V. Question 57)

All these remarks on confidence bear an explicit acknowledgement of the music skills and techniques, previously learned by these pupils as a condition for 'showing creativity'. One of the points suggested throughout the interviews was that a certain level of technical skill was needed if pupils were to show their creativity:

They could have fantastic ideas, but just not the particular technical skills to realise them. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 39)

They are all creative...but they haven't...got the same skill level to let it come out.  
(Elaine. Appendix V. Question 24)

At the same time, however, some teachers hypothesised the existence of an 'inherited' music skill. Emma, describing the pupils' process of composing a pop song, put it this way:

...The melody will come next generally, they won't think harmonically at all, but in the back of their minds you would be amazed of how many groups - because they had this harmonic structure in the head from the day they were born - will sing a melody that goes over I, VI, IV, V or I, IV, V. It would be there and I can just go in and slot the chords in, if they have that harmonic thing. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 22)

In the same way, four teachers commented that not all pupils developed their composing skills to the same extent; some students could be given 'lots of ideas' and they would not still be 'sure how to develop them' (Helen, Appendix V, question 25). When describing their pupils, the teachers made some comments about how much their creativity could be acquired or inherited. These comments were coded in

a new category entitled 'Home background'. Participants presented different viewpoints regarding the perceived influence of the pupils' background on their creativity. Patrick observed that a musical family background was not necessarily a condition for creative students:

I don't think I can generalise. I can think of students who are very...musically able...who don't have musical backgrounds and others who do. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 22)

Laura, a teacher in a multicultural comprehensive inner city school, described her pupils as follows:

Every student in the class does have something to offer, whether they've got access to instruments at home or not... One Albanian student...when...improvising he's quite creative, quite confident, but he doesn't come from [a] musical background...[and] doesn't play instruments at home... Some of the cultures are much richer in music than others...for example the Turkish community [which has]...a lot of members...going to community services...always playing and singing....[The pupils'] background does have a very large effect on what they bring, and what they come out with. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 23)

The above example of the Albanian student can be compared with the description by Patrick in the previous quotation, regarding very musically able pupils without a musical background. Patrick commented that the music home background did not necessarily influence the music abilities of students. Laura, on the contrary, thought that the pupil's background had a 'large effect' on the individual. It has to be said that the classrooms of Laura (an inner city school in a deprived area) and Patrick (a comprehensive catholic inner city school for girls) were rather different and so were their teaching experiences. A more detailed analysis of the influence of the teachers' experiences on the teachers' perceptions is made in Chapter 10 (section 3). It might

be that the creative ability of a pupil is a mixture of originality and the use of learned skills, combined in each person in different ways. The following quotation by one of the teachers, commenting on a unit on Blues improvisation, exemplifies this dualism:

The ones that were more successful were more confident and self-assured about what they were doing...they used more complex rhythms...But maybe it's showing more experience rather than creativity. It's utilising experience....If creativity is something to do with an individual...in terms of them discovering something new for themselves, then that is...difficult to measure. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 62)

It has to be noted that even though comments regarding more able pupils were all coded under the 'creative pupil' fold, three teachers were reticent to label students in such terms:

I'm quite wary about labelling students as being creative or not creative. I would take a much more individual basis on, depending upon the activity and the situation and the lesson as it goes across. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 19)

By means of putting emphasis on other issues - rather than the personal characteristics of pupils - participants who felt reticent in labelling pupils as creative, universalised 'creativity' as a potential skill of all children:

There are so many things that one can do creatively. I think it's more to do with a type of awareness...rather than what you are doing....An actual being in the moment that makes something creative, rather than doing it unconsciously. If it's done consciously, and you are absolutely there...then that's creation, as far I'm concerned. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 57)

#### 7.4 - Environment: the context for creativity

Teachers' comments and characterisations of the most appropriate environment by which creativity could be enhanced were coded under two broad categories: 'Emotional environment' and 'Physical environment'. The focus here is on the former; the latter is considered in Chapter 8 because it relates to more practical issues such as classroom settings and proposals for improvement. This emotional environment or 'atmosphere' was identified by a teacher as follows:

You can be teaching techniques, but in the end...a lot of our creativity is about 'feeling'. And you can set up the right sort of...mood and THAT can be taught.  
(Emma. Appendix V. Question 37)

The use of this term 'emotional environment' here is similar to the description of creative environment by Beetlestone (1998) examined in Chapter 2, which included the emotional and the intellectual climates. Therefore the category 'Emotional environment' and the subcategories 'Motivation' and 'Time requirements' are examined in this section. It might seem rather strange to talk about time requirements within the context of the emotional environment. However, this term refers to the stress suffered by pupils when experiencing lack of time during composition activities. This subcategory is examined at the end of the section (p. 156).

The 'Emotional environment', or the appropriate atmosphere for developing the pupils' creativity, was characterised by participants as an environment where pupils could feel confident, playing their compositions and improvisations in front of their peers without fear of disapproval. Indeed, 'confidence' was seen as essential for

developing and exhibiting creativity. One of the teachers commented that with some of her classes, composition was generally weaker than other areas, because as she observed:

...I think that stems largely from confidence, pupil perception, and self-confidence. They're very self-critical....they have an idea of what they want it to sound like, then realise that is extremely difficult. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 43)

This meant that pupils had to be prepared 'for it to go wrong', in an environment allowing 'risk-taking' (Sarah, questions 57 and 59). As Elaine observed, sometimes the important issue for pupils in showing their creativity it is not their musicianship, but their confidence. Pupils, she said, 'just don't think they can do it...and really they can' (Appendix V, question 14). Participants observed that a key matter was to facilitate a classroom atmosphere where pupils could play in front of each other with self-assurance:

From what they do in the classroom they feel confident that they can take their musical compositions, and perform it not just to each other, but to assemblies... A great part of the music ethos it's to share their own compositions, in a public area, whether it's showing it amongst assemblies or going outside into the communities. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 32)

One of the teachers, commenting on a video extract of one of his pupils improvising at the xylophone during a rondo exercise, observed:

I had to...encourage 'just do it again, keep it in time'. She did and it was better. And even though she obviously felt a little bit uncomfortable, about being asked to do it again....there wasn't adverse reaction from anybody. No one laughs if it all goes wrong because we are used to having that sort of safe environment. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 38)

Another aspect in providing this sort of environment, as participants noted, is the teachers' support in keeping the pupils' motivation and self-confidence high:

It's encouragement as they go along, as well. When they know what they've done is good, then they'll carry on. So it's trying to get around more...saying 'yes you are doing fine, keep going'. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 39)

Participants noted that the motivation of the pupils during the activities was a key issue in their involvement and success in the lessons. The comments on how to nurture this motivation were coded under the subcategory 'Motivation' (see Table 7.1). One of the teachers suggested that pupils were more engaged in classroom activities if they had 'something to take away':

They see that what they do...has an immediate value...but then...make connections in the bigger picture. So they actually feel they are learning things....This idea that they have something to take away. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 13)

'Enjoyment' and 'having a positive experience' (Patrick, Appendix V, questions 13 and 21) were other ingredients for motivating students. During the first lesson of a unit on pop song composition, Emma worked with songs from the charts, giving examples of choruses by Macy Gray and Toploader. She used 'Still' by Macy Gray (from the album *On how life is*, EPIC), '911' by Wyclef Jean (*The Eclectic 2 Sides II A book*, COLUMBIA) and 'Dancing in the moonlight' by Toploader (*Onka's big moka*, SONY). These songs were in the radio and TV charts when the lessons were videotaped. She knew what was going on in terms of popular music artists and fashions. Her answer when asked for the aim of that first lesson was as follows:

The aim was to switch them on, get them excited about the project, and I thought by using music that was very current...that that would excite them...focus them...make

them think about choruses in a way, rather than just hearing them....Because it is something they know...and if they know it, they like it, and it means they are actually participating on another level if they like it already. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 11 and 12)

Helen observed that particularly at secondary school level the students were perceived preferring to listen to popular music:

As soon as you get higher in the school they...turn their nose up at things if you are playing something that's classical...that they wouldn't listen to. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 49)

Emma suggested, however, that the confidence of a small number of 'classically trained' pupils seemed to diminish when they were confronted with activities within a popular music style:

In Year 8 for instance, when I get my pop song book out and they all sing pop songs...there is a couple of kids who are very musical, who have [instrumental] music lessons...who do not know any of the songs. Presumably, because at home the radio is always on classical music...and they don't hear popular music...So they may find that process [i.e. pop song composition], when they get to Year 9, more difficult. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 22)

The same teacher offered a description of this type of pupils:

[They are]...kids who have already, by the age of thirteen, being completely indoctrinated by formal music training who actually find [popular music] more difficult...than the kids who are still very orally based. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 25)

The issues raised in the quotations above are further discussed in Chapter 9, where they are compared with the relevant music curriculum literature.

The feeling of ‘ownership’ of the work, by pupils doing projects carried over a number of weeks, was also seen as beneficial in sustaining pupils’ motivation, the emphasis being ‘on doing and engaging’ (Sarah, Appendix V, question 71). This proved valuable if the students were to work beyond school hours:

That’s a piece of work that they have been developing over a number of weeks, and usually, most of them like to complete it and feel quite proud of what they’ve done....Often I say ‘can you stay behind’ and they never seem to mind to do that....I think they just enjoy it. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 47)

Trying to be ‘enthusiastic’ (e.g. Helen, Appendix V, question 49) was regarded by participants as important in retaining pupils’ motivation. Participants stated several environmental factors they thought inhibited the development of creativity. One of the main concerns of the teachers, related with the emotional environment, had to do with time issues. These comments were categorised under the subcategory ‘Time requirements’ (see Table 7.1) and focused on the negative relationship between ‘time pressures’ and the appropriate atmosphere. This relationship emerges when anxiety is brought onto teacher and pupils, distorting or even breaking the appropriate environment for creativity. Three of the six teachers participating in the study observed that in composition projects, added time pressures brought by examinations and a short time to finish the units, affected the atmosphere for creativity. Therefore the overall quality of the pupils’ work suffered:

We had such a short amount of time...there was that added pressure of having to learn the songs for the concert AND do the song-writing... I had to push, push, push, push the whole time....And now we’ve come back after half term, the concert is



over...[and] they've stopped fighting me. You know, it is just really relaxed and it wasn't relaxed before. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 6 and 10)

They liked the idea that they were free to come up with their own ideas, but they wanted more time. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 34)

Helen explained this happened particularly at the end of Term:

Ideally if we had enough time we could then go through each group and give them an idea of what they could have done to improve it. So I try to do that, if I've got time... But the year sevens seemed very rushed at the end of last term. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 35)

To summarise the 'Time requirements' subcategory, the stress suffered by pupils under time restrictions during music activities was perceived by these teachers as detrimental for their compositions. These time pressures could be brought by exams, preparation for school concerts, increasing workload at the end of term or poor weekly timetable for music that would limit the time allocated to composition projects. The full picture of the teachers' role in developing the emotional environment is analysed in Chapter 8 (section 3).

### **7.5 - The creative process**

Participants did not appear to have clearly formulated ideas regarding their pupils' general process of creativity. The following extract from one of the interviews exemplifies this point:

Interviewer	Would you say the students follow some process when improvising?
Elaine (15)	Mm...a process of their own?
Interviewer	Yeah.

Elaine (16) I don't know. I don't know if they do, or not. (Appendix V)

The teachers' observations were focussed mainly on their teaching practice and the steps followed by pupils to complete the requirements of the music lessons observed. The comments on the creative process, including the categories 'Improvisation-Composition', 'Structured process' and 'Unstructured process', are examined in this section. As noted in the introduction of the present chapter, the teachers' work is part of their discourse, and aiming to separate completely their perception of the creative process from their perception of teaching improvisation and composition would be misleading (and, indeed, impossible).

One of the issues that emerged from the interviews with the teachers is that the creative processes during composition and improvisation were considered as different. This was coded under the category 'Improvisation-composition'. All the teachers saw improvisation as a step prior to composition or as part of the preliminary stages in the compositional process. Two participants pointed out this issue as follows:

Improvisation comes very well in the unit when they are actually trying to formulate the compositions.... They're having to listen and problem-solve... When [they] are improvising...they'll stumble across something they like and they'll hold on to it. (Sarah. Appendix V. Questions 9 and 23)

Improvising seemed...a preliminary...step onto composition. Because...their compositions will arise actually from improvisation. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 6)

When improvising, the creative process was perceived as a structured one, with different degrees of organisation, depending on the activity. These observations were

coded under the 'Structured process' category. Patrick commented that he was using a structured process when teaching improvisation. He would follow 'three stages': setting up, playing and reflecting. Therefore the pupils appeared to follow these stages to learn how to improvise. Commenting on some videotaped extracts of his lessons he put it this way:

The actual improvising it's put it into three stages. The first part of the lesson was just setting up the conditions, the instruments and so on. Then, we actually made the music...improvising, and...going round the tune....And, the final stage, we were trying to reflect upon what we'd just done, and I suppose that is the distinctive bit about music in the classroom....with the aim...to conceptualise, to understand intellectually what we've done...and then to develop or improve upon it later.  
(Patrick. Appendix V. Question 28)

The teachers observed during composition units commented that they would normally start the unit by introducing the pupils to the style and forms concerned (if any) with music examples. They would then give pupils tasks and time to explore them for themselves. Pupils would be asked to work towards a specific goal; for example pupils would be asked by Emma to compose a pop song, by Helen to make up a melody for a given rondo, or by Laura to compose music for a film scene. At the end, teacher and pupils would examine and reflect on the characteristics of the pupils' work and their success in achieving the original goal.

A further consideration was made by a teacher who suggested that different ways of learning and the students' intellectual level would affect their compositional process:

It depends on preferred modes of learning and how children engage with music....If you take into account...Swanwick's spiral, depending on...what kind of intellectual music level they are engaged in, with the sound they are making, and their

understanding of those sounds...that would have a part to play, as well as other psychological factors. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 25)

Participants considered that the creative process would be influenced by the age of the students and suggested that this process would feed from the continuing learning development:

I think there are processes within each scheme.... In Year 9 we start by doing chords sequences, so they have structures as to how to go about that, and then...they bring that when you point it out into the next thing, and then they improvise, and...hopefully they bring that into the jazz, so they start to understand how one idea links to another, and how to develop it further. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 28)

The process is affected by what they are given, and how much feeding we give them, and the environment they could do that in. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 11)

Although all teachers perceived to some extent that the creative process was structured, with different degrees of organisation depending on the activity, five participants observed that, in some cases, this process appeared to work beyond a given structure. These comments were categorised under the 'Unstructured process' category (Table 7.1). For example Helen observed that after the first lesson of the unit videotaped, some pupils advanced further than others, and they did not have a 'set system' of things to do week by week:

We don't...say...in your second week we would do this or whatever....First of all we talked about how they can play around with ideas, to experiment and take what they like from it, and abandon what they don't... We don't have a set system for that. (Appendix V, question 13)

Laura explained that she did not want students to follow any given structure, in a unit on free composition for a film scene, and Emma, commenting on her lessons,

observed that there were ‘many ways’ to compose and ‘opening the doors’ (Appendix V, question 21). Another participant was absorbed watching from the video extracts the shift of level between the improvisations of Year 7 and Year 9 students, even though as he stated, they were not taught ‘lots of musical skills on improvising tunes’ (Patrick, Appendix V, question 35). In his view, this showed that ‘inside’ the pupils, ‘musical connections’ were being made.

In summary, participants did not have much to say about the creative process of their pupils. Instead they focussed their comments on the process of teaching (‘structured’ or ‘unstructured’) and the differences between improvising and composing.

## **7.6 - The creative product**

The teachers’ comments on the musical outcome of their pupils were coded under three categories: ‘Assessment’, ‘Originality’ and ‘Music style and conventions’. The considerations about music style and the conventions within which participants felt they were teaching, are analysed in Chapter 8 (section 5). The focus of this section is on the teachers’ views of originality and the assessment of creativity in the pupils’ products.

In order to give the pupils good marks in the ‘Creating and developing musical ideas’ part of the National Curriculum (DfEE and QCA, 1999a), teachers were looking for a ‘sense of style’ in the students’ work:

I would perhaps go to an A\* if they did something which was really really...stylish.  
(Elaine. Appendix V. Question 35)

In Emma's words:

[The pupils] can tell which ones are just like basic...and...the ones that...you go out and buy it.... It's that extra little something that you can't put in words almost...that aesthetic-NESS of a piece. Whether it be a piece of pop music or something that just makes you go 'oh yes, wow!'. And it doesn't have to be because of the major seventh at the end of the third line, or the sustained fourth or the whatever. There's just some magic has been captured. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 71)

Another example of this 'magic' was observed in the following remark by Patrick, commenting on an extract of a lesson on improvisation with tuned percussion instruments:

When someone is improvising and it's really good, often everything will become really hushed. And...the students will know, as we all know 'oh that's really good'. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 28)

When assessing creativity in improvisation activities, some similar features were looked for in order to give a good grade, such as 'musical awareness' (e.g. Patrick, Appendix V, question 32) and 'sense of style' (e.g. Emma, Appendix V, question 71). For example, in lessons with Year 7 and 9 groups, Patrick used some tunes (e.g. 'Arriba') from *Jazz in the classroom: practical sessions in jazz and improvisation* (Harvey, 1988) and explained his assessment criteria as follows:

...The first thing I'm looking for [is]: are they...with the flow of the music, playing along in time?...Then I'm listening to the phrasing...'are there certain patterns?'...The next stage would then be 'have they got a rhythm that has some sort of character to it?'....'Are they getting a...balance between contrast and repetition?'...[and] 'is there awareness of the overall sixteen-bar chord progression?...How are they ending it?'...Those are things I'm looking for...if

there's sense of style in what they're doing, starting to introduce elements of repetition and contrast...building towards a climax...I suppose it's through that, that I'm evaluating their progress. (Patrick. Appendix V. Questions 32 and 36)

Two teachers observed that more creative pupils would achieve higher marks in composition and improvisation. It has to be noted that these teachers preferred using terms like 'style' and 'originality' instead of creativity. For them, there were two problems in setting assessment criteria specifically for 'creativity': the lack of a concrete definition of creativity and the difficulty of measuring it, if there was to be a specific definition. Sarah observed she would not commit herself on this issue 'without knowing more about it' (Appendix V, question 43).

All participants nevertheless, had criteria for assessing pupils' work. It was the final piece composed by the pupils (i.e. its performance, recording, score or a combination of these three) that was used by the teacher to grade their efforts. Teachers observed that the criteria had to be explained to pupils. The criteria were generally elucidated at the beginning of the unit, and worked through the project, sometimes with the aid of music examples played by the teacher; or otherwise explained at the beginning of the activity in one-off lessons. Four participants also gave pupils an opportunity to write down their own self-assessment at the end of the units. They suggested that discussing with the whole class their individual and group work, is essential in order to get an idea of appraising and to start picking out 'problems or 'good things'' (Helen, Appendix V, question 34). This is a 'kind of evaluation that they take part in' (Elaine, question 37), discussing 'in their groups, rather than filling out the charts and boxes' (Laura, question 28). This sense of discussion with the students was regarded as a positive tool to make them aware of the qualities of successful work,

and was the way to set the criteria with which to assess the work of their peers and their own work. One of the teachers commenting on the evaluation of a Pop song composition project put it this way:

We have really good discussions about what worked...What didn't work?...What was the hook, or where were the successful moments? If...you had to buy one of those [songs] on single, which one would you buy? Why?...Is very important...they are involved in that process. Because there's no point in giving them the grade if they don't understand why. (Emma, Appendix V, Question 51)

Another teacher organised the assessment of the whole unit in the form of a 'competition', and let the students grade their own group-work from anonymised tapes. She explained that in this 'Blues Inter-form Competition' unit, the best take from each class was put on a compilation tape and the pupils awarded the prize for the best recording. It was observed that at the same time she would discuss with students 'what makes a good performance work' and 'what things make it more or less exciting' (Sarah, Appendix V, questions 2 to 4). The grading of group-work was, for some teachers, a problematic issue. Some participants would give the members of a group an individual mark depending on each pupil's input in the composition, and other teachers would award the same grade to all group members, giving 'room within that evaluation' to grade some members with 'an extra star' (Emma, Appendix V, question 51).

Even though all the teachers had detailed assessment criteria specifying the outcomes to be achieved by pupils, two of the teachers observed that the term 'creativity' was not included in the criteria. For example Emma pointed out that there was 'lots of talk' about mood, about taking ideas on and 'developing ideas' in her Music



Department's criteria for Key Stage 3, but the word 'creativity' was not used (Emma, Appendix V, question 53). Sarah observed that measuring creativity in the pupils' work would be 'extremely hard' because it would come down to 'having a concrete definition of creativity', which she did not think she had (Sarah, Appendix V, question 39).

Regarding the teachers' views of 'originality', participants observed that one of their aims during the lessons was to get the pupils to work with 'their own' music. Participants reflected this idea with a variety of comments. They observed that some of their objectives during the units were that pupils had to 'take part and create in groups...their own ORIGINAL song' (Emma, Appendix V, question 10); pupils had 'to have a go at coming up with their own tune' (Helen, question 40); and that they had to 'try and make something which was identifiably theirs rather than identifiably what' the teacher had given them (Sarah, question 15).

### **7.7 – The teachers' own creativity**

As pointed out in the introduction to the present chapter, participants commented not only about the pupils' creativity but about their own creativity as well. These comments were focussed on the teachers' perceptions of their own teaching and music-making skills. They were grouped under the category 'Teachers' own creativity', and are examined in this section separate from the four themes of the framework.

Three of the teachers participating in the study complained about their lack of training in either composing or the teaching of composing skills. Two teachers commented that in their own secondary education, they were asked to produce a piece of music and ‘weren’t taught how to do it’ (Sarah, Appendix V, question 29). Some referred to the music courses in their university degrees as too ‘traditional’ (Elaine, question 27 and Patrick, question 23), where they did mainly ‘pastiche composition’ (Patrick, question 23). Others complained about the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the training they received there to become teachers. Two of the participants explained it as follows:

On my PGCE we played around with improvisation...but we didn’t discuss...big ideas and how to go about composing....I...sometimes...wish I’d studied it further, to be able to bring more ideas in. (Helen. Appendix V. Questions 27 and 60)

At the PGCE course...we weren’t...taught very well at how to compose ourselves....Now, if I was asked to compose, I would do a much better job through the teaching that I’ve done. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 23)

At this point a further consideration should be made regarding the ‘Teachers’ own creativity’ category. Participants’ comments point to two different types of creativity. Firstly their creativity as musicians, that is expressed not necessarily inside the school (for example playing, composing or improvising with other musicians or individually). And secondly their creativity as teachers or ‘pedagogical creativity’, that is expressed in the classroom. Participants generally considered themselves pedagogically creative and two teachers observed that teaching gave them opportunities to fulfil this creativity:

Time and time again....I will have ideas for what I'm doing when I'm teaching, that I have not had before, until that split second moment in the lesson. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 25)

Patrick observed however that in the current educational climate there is much emphasis on planning, and education is seen as a business-oriented activity concerned with the delivery of targets. This was not in line with his style of teaching:

I don't approach my teaching in such a rigid way....this whole emphasis upon planning...and this idea of....aims and objectives that you tick off at the end. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 25)

Creative teaching, according to Patrick, is being inhibited. This notion of the teacher's creativity is very important and is further discussed in Chapter 9, section 7, when comparing the teachers' perceptions with the literature. It was noted by four participants that creativity in their music-making and in their teaching were two complementary things. Helen explained it as follows:

As a teacher I'm creative in a different sense, because I'm...looking at how we can extend students' ideas...You can't go in with a set idea of how it's going to come out, because it never does. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 26)

A further point regarding the participants' own creativity that emerged from this study, is that pupils can have a positive influence in the development of the teachers' creativity as musicians. One of the participants, a part-time songwriter and studio singer, acknowledged her pupils as one of her main sources of inspiration, considering herself a 'senior learner'. The following quotation, left uncut because of its illustrative value, exemplifies this view:

[Emma] [After] the jazz course [I had for a year]...I found it really difficult to get back to...writing songs and creating, because I'd been given so much technique, so many rules that...it almost destroyed it for me....Fortunately...teaching...helped me to get back to a place where I could write songs myself.

[Oscar] So, would you say that your pupils help your own creativity?

[Emma] Oh yes, yes, definitely...I get a lot from them. Just as much from them....In a way, I don't feel like I'm a teacher. I just feel like I am a SENIOR learner....and the teaching just happens to be the fact that I'm older than they are. But I forget they are kids all the time, and the best times I have are when we're...making music together. (Appendix V. Questions 40 and 42)

These quotations also confirm the need, already suggested, for a further differentiation within the 'Teachers' own creativity' category: a differentiation between their creativity as musicians in what they compose or improvise (not necessarily in the school setting), and their pedagogical creativity. The above quotation by Emma is an example of the former, and Patrick's remarks on having new ideas when teaching and approaching teaching in a flexible way are an example of the latter.

## **7.8 – Conclusion**

Several issues suggested in the pilot study, regarding the Pupil-Environment-Process-Product framework, emerged again after the analysis of the interviews with the final participants. These issues were coded under twenty-eight categories and subcategories. Some of them have been discussed in this chapter, with the aim to

focus on conceptual issues regarding the meanings attached to the word 'creativity' by participants.

The categories 'Assessment', 'Originality', 'Structured process', 'Improvisation-Composition', 'Home background', 'Emotional environment' and its subcategory 'Motivation' were of a rather descriptive nature, illustrating the teachers' views regarding these issues. This is not to say that all participants presented identical views. It has been suggested that even though they considered that creativity could be developed in all pupils, they did not agree on how this creativity was to be described and were aware of the intricacy of doing so. The variety of views found in the teachers participating in the study exemplified the complexity of this topic.

The most interesting findings were those which were somehow unexpected. These findings were coded under the categories regarding the pupils 'Personal characteristics', the 'Unstructured process', the 'Time requirements' (subcategory of the 'Emotional environment'), and the 'Teachers' own creativity'. In summary, these findings are concerned with these teachers' perceptions of the following:

- Firstly, various 'creativities', including the traditional and new concepts of creativity, the pupils' individual creativity and the pupils' creativity relative to peers, and the teachers' pedagogical and musical creativities.
- Secondly, the pupils' diverse creative personalities that would point to different learning styles.
- Thirdly, the 'time requirements' for the appropriate 'emotional environment' for creativity.

- And finally, the fact that participants had little to say about their pupils' creative process.

What is significant about these findings is the insights they provide into how these teachers think and feel about their work and their pupils. They show something of the dynamic of that relationship. These findings are reconsidered in Chapter 11, focussing on educational implications. The issue of the pupils' diverse learning styles is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which again is concerned with the first research question, but focussing on practical issues.

# CHAPTER 8

## THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY: PRACTICAL ISSUES IN MUSIC EDUCATION

## CHAPTER 8. THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY: PRACTICAL ISSUES IN MUSIC EDUCATION

### 8.1 – Introduction

In this chapter the rest of the categories and subcategories of the four-fold framework developed in Chapter 7 (Table 7.1) are examined. The aim is to complete the exploration of the first research question - *What are these schoolteachers' perceptions of creativity?* In contrast with the categories analysed in previous sections that were focussed on conceptual issues, the teachers' perceptions discussed in this chapter are essentially concerned with practical issues related to the teaching of music. They are presented under four different headings, following the themes introduced in Chapter 2. The following section is focused on the teachers' perceptions of creative pupils working in music activities, in particular with the issue of different pupils being creative in different ways and the teachers' need to adapt to their individual learning. Section 3 explores further the teachers' views on the physical and emotional aspects of the most appropriate environment for developing the pupils' creativity. Section 4 is concerned with issues regarding the creative process. In particular, the categories relating to the teachers' explanations of the pupils' interactions and the different activities videotaped are examined. In section 5 the observations about creative products are further explored.



## 8.2 - The teachers' perceptions of creative pupils working in music activities<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that one teacher observed the existence of at least two different types of creative personalities. She called them the 'introverted' and the 'extroverted' types, and observed that they both had 'to be nurtured' because it is 'very easy to miss one group either way'. This teacher offered a description of an 'extrovert' type of creative pupil, which seems to match the apparently disorganised behaviour of some creative individuals as illustrated by Cropley (1992). This pupil was described as having 'the most incredible energy', the only problem being that if she was negative she would 'pull lots of people with her' (Emma, Appendix V, question 36). In addition to these personality characteristics, four teachers observed that pupils experience music activities with different ways of learning. For example some pupils may be more confident than others when working with open-ended music activities such as composing a pop song. As Emma put it:

Three or four in each class...don't get involved in the process at all...and find the whole thing a little bit too open may be, too unclear. Whereas a lot of them find it a very natural process. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 22)

From this quotation it appears that if the teacher has pupils with different ways of learning in the same class, the same music activity could be affecting students in different ways. In other words, the activities would facilitate the work of those students whose learning styles match best. This issue will be further discussed later on in Chapter 9, when comparing the teachers' perceptions with the literature.

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<sup>1</sup> The teachers' quotations presented in this section are drawn from the category 'Individual learning' and its two subcategories, 'Adaptor pupils' and 'Innovator pupils' (see Chapter 7, Table 7.1, p. 143).

There are pupils who prefer working within a set of music parameters, and find it difficult to come up with the initial ideas when a music activity is openly defined. Comments regarding these pupils were grouped under 'Adaptor pupils', as opposed to 'Innovator pupils', both subcategories of 'Individual learning'. For the 'adaptor' type of student, closed activities with a range of set instructions were perceived as more appropriate to develop their musical creativity:

For that unit, when they do their improvisation using the Blues scale...students...often get into a pattern, and they just repeat it over and over again. So, we have a checklist of things like 'have some short notes and some long notes', 'use different pitches', 'repeat little patterns by sequence' and things like that. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 13)

This teacher observed that some of the students who feel more confident working with closed composition activities would do exactly what she 'asked them, and do it really well', and she commented they would be 'creative as well' (Elaine, Appendix V, question 24). Emma, Laura, Elaine and Sarah observed nevertheless that the majority of their pupils were happily engaged with activities with different degrees of 'open' composition. One of these teachers, commenting on a pop song composition unit videotaped, observed that 'about eighty or ninety per cent' of the pupils were 'involved in some way or other', and that only 'about ten per cent' did not fully engage with these activities (Emma, Appendix V, question 22).

The issue for music teachers, then, is how to cope with the different learning styles in any given classroom. Some cases were described of pupils who seemed to truly dislike 'closed approach' activities. Comments regarding these pupils were categorised within the 'Innovator pupils' subcategory. One such example was a pupil

videotaped at Elaine's school. He was described as 'naughty' and also 'very creative', in a way that was 'always out of the ordinary'. Commenting on one of the videotaped extracts the teacher amplified this view:

He is very creative in a kind of anarchic way in that he would do things like listen to the tunes on his mobile phone, and reproduce them on the keyboard, and I think that's creative. I think that's quite a skill. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 24)

Elaine explained this pupil had some behavioural problems in the past. During a unit on blues, this boy approached the activities that the teacher had asked all pupils to complete in a different way. He adapted the original blues rhythm to a more contemporary 'techno' style and quoted a melody from a dance song in his solo:

He would just do exactly what he wants in any lesson...and he loves playing the keyboard, so I'd rather have him in the class doing something, than out of the class - which he has been during some of the year. So I try not to get too cross if he is not doing exactly what I've asked them to do. And what he was doing I felt was quite valid, so, I let him carry on with that. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 10)

As the above teacher observed, some pupils 'enjoy the freedom of improvising and others think it's too hard, because they don't know what to do'. She commented that the latter group of pupils just needs 'a few ideas feeding in' (Elaine, Appendix V, question 13).

Four of the teachers pointed out that another factor to take into account, when working with composition and improvisation, is the level of musical development of the students. These teachers observed the need to adapt to the previous learning of pupils, especially with the first years of secondary schooling (Years 7 and 8):

Year 7 it's working out what they can do...Some of those won't have done music in Primary school at all, and some of them will have done it all their school life, so you're sort of fighting that as well, trying to get that balance it's quite difficult. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 50)

Surprisingly the National Curriculum has been in place for 11 years, and one of the aims of its introduction was to unify the pupils' learning across different schools. This issue is further considered in Chapter 11 when discussing the educational implications of the study. Sarah, commenting on a videotaped extract of a Blues composition unit with a Year 8 group, observed that the process of composing depends on 'how children engage with music', and also 'to what extent there is understanding and experience' (Sarah, Appendix V, Question 25). For this reason, these teachers explained that they tried to work individually with students, rather than with the whole class. In doing this and going around 'talking and listening' to what pupils did during the lessons, they were able to know what the pupils had understood (Elaine, Appendix V, question 10). Sarah, commenting on some of the videotaped extracts of her lessons, pointed out that there would be 'different kids for different activities' and that she was just trying to find a way in which to engage everybody and then 'move on those who particularly take to whatever activity' (Sarah, Appendix V, question 17). Emma observed that the use of practice rooms, having the students in small groups, facilitated a better pupil response. In this way she could 'approach each small group in their individual way', because they would need 'different instructions and different ways of getting into it' (Emma, Appendix V, question 18).

In summary, participants perceived the pupils' learning styles and level of musical development as the two major factors to take into account regarding the students' individual differences. These views are considered in the light of the music curriculum literature in the next chapter.

### **8.3 - The environment for developing creativity in music lessons**

The participants' observations regarding the effects of the physical and emotional environment in developing their pupils' musical creativity are examined under six new categories and subcategories: 'Teachers' role', 'School culture', 'Teaching methods' (subcategories of the 'Emotional environment' examined in Chapter 7), 'Complaints and proposals for improvement' and 'Classroom settings' (subcategories of 'Physical environment').

Participants' comments about their role when teaching improvisation and composition were coded under the 'Teachers' role' subcategory, within the 'Emotional environment' category of the framework. Teachers described their role as 'facilitator', 'nurturer' and 'helper', sometimes just setting up the conditions in which pupils could explore their ideas. Sarah explained thus:

A kind of facilitator, as someone who can provide them with experience and advice...to get what they want from the music, because often they kind of know what they want...but they find it very difficult to actually make it sound like that.  
(Sarah. Appendix V. Question 20)

Laura felt that she only gave pupils the activities and the instruments they wanted, and that her input was the minimum due to the freedom of the project (i.e. pupils were asked to compose music for a film scene):

We gave them the actual film, and we put them in a group that they had to work in, on a particular scene. So, if anything, we just sort of described in much detail what action was going on. And they had to imitate that action through their music. And whatever they came up with, was their own musical ideas...rather than me telling them 'use this scale, use this particular ostinato', it was more of a 'let us just see what they come up with'. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 7)

Three teachers commented that depending on the activity (e.g. group improvisation, individual improvisation, composition) and the pupils, they would give them prompts or ideas to develop:

When they are composing...you can give them a structure to start with, or give them ideas...to develop [theirs]. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 25)

The teachers interviewed generally agreed that one of the main roles was to facilitate the environment in which pupils could make music. In the previous chapter, when analysing the teachers' descriptions of the appropriate emotional environment, it was pointed out that participants perceived 'confidence' as an important factor for pupils to develop their music potential (Chapter 7, section 4). When describing their role as teachers, all participants also suggested in one way or another that building up an environment where students feel comfortable to play in front of each other, developing their confidence, was one of their key tasks:

My role as a teacher...[is] to try to develop confidence in them in what they are doing so they'll have a go, and try things out. (Elaine, Appendix V, questions 17 and 18)

An additional subcategory regarding 'School culture' was coded within the 'Emotional environment' category. This included the teachers' descriptions of their schools' music activities and its aims, and the teachers' comments about their Music Department and its status within the school. What emerges from the interview transcripts is that the music activities beyond the school timetable were considered by the six teachers as complementary, and that sometimes the classroom activities would be a stimulus for the extra-curricular activities and vice versa. All the schools involved in the present enquiry had some degree of extra-curricular music activities, including bands, choirs and instrumental music lessons. As one of the teachers put it, the aim was to provide a 'musical stimulating background' in the school, and a 'sort of positive environment...this idea of...a musical community that everybody can belong to' (Patrick, Appendix V, questions 22 and 49). Four of the teachers observed that the classroom music experiences at Key Stage 3 were crucial for the subsequent choice of music subjects at a later stage (i.e. GCSE and A level Music), and were also crucial for the pupils' choice of extra-curricular activities involving music; if the students were motivated in the classroom work, they would 'go and do other things' (Patrick, Appendix V, question 22). This teacher described his music school culture as follows:

Ultimately...we are trying to...create a very positive and vibrant musical culture within the school... I believe the most important thing [is that]...students feel they belong to [it]...as part of their school lives, and this is where this sort of motivation thing comes from... Music is an uplifting thing...and when things work...people feel uplifted in some way. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 48)

He observed that these 'uplifting experiences' are the ones students remember:

[This] is not something we TEACH, but we can create the conditions in which that can happen... And that would affect people in a way that you cannot quantify, that you cannot put on in a level...it affects people's lives. That's what they will remember when they leave school. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 48)

The above teacher explained that some of the basic conditions to facilitate these 'uplifting experiences' are 'being organised as a department' and 'having decent facilities', making sure that 'students take an active process in their learning' and that students are 'aware of learning new things', taking their learning forward in the 'particular directions that they want to' (Patrick, Appendix V, question 48). He explained that if pupils feel positive about what they do in the classroom they will want to get involved in music 'above and beyond their classroom things, whether is to learn an instrument or...to take part in an extra group' (question 48).

In contrast, another teacher explained she had some worries regarding pupils being 'left out' from ensemble and band extra-curricular activities because 'ensemble things are just for people who tend to be having lessons' (Emma, Appendix V, question 64). She observed that a lot of students are not interested 'in sitting in a room with one person learning an instrument'. As she put it, students 'want to be doing music that is *doing music*'. The teacher amplified this view:

You can't play in the wind band until you are grade two, which means you have to sit in a room on your own for three years...before you are allowed to participate with other people. And that's my big flag, really. I want people to be able to participate from day one, on a musical experience. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 64)

This teacher commented that to achieve this, she was doing a composition project every half term with every group in Key Stage 3, as well as a concert every year with



the pupils compositions, from Year 7 to 9, so all pupils would get a chance to participate:

I feel quite strongly about the fact that I don't want people left out of things because they are not good instrumentalists or formal instrumentalists. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 64)

The teachers also described many more activities that were regarded as 'inclusive' and accessible to all students including 'junk bands' (Helen, Appendix V, question 71 and Elaine, question 52), a cappella groups and choirs (Emma, Appendix V, questions 52 and 64, and Laura, question 37), DJ and rock groups (Laura, Appendix V, question 36; Elaine, question 56 and Sarah, question 75), the organisation of a musical where 'students who would not normally sing' would have to be on stage (Helen, Appendix V, question 65), and the organisation of 'talent shows' every term where students would 'have a go...developing independence and confidence' (Sarah, Appendix V, question 73).

Three of the teachers commented that having good relations with the other teachers and the Head of department, and receiving support from the Head teacher when needed, was important in keeping alive this positive music school culture. This issue was expressed as follows by one of the teachers:

[The Head of music] is incredibly open to all of this, so we do really well. I think we have a very creative relationship within the department, because we are all very open about change and about trying different things, and about creativity, and music making and being involved in a musical experience. I think there is a lot of room for things to move and grow, and develop. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 64)

Another teacher described the positive relationship between the Music Department and the school management as follows:

I think we are very fortunate...having...a Head teacher who is very supportive. Anything I've wanted to do...he's always said 'yes do'. And that makes a big difference, because I have worked in a school where as long as the concerts were good, the Head didn't really mind what was going on in the lessons. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 66)

In contrast to these comments regarding supportive senior managers, one participant (Laura) reported that her Music Department was under pressure due to financial constraint, and was being systematically pushed aside for the benefit of other curriculum areas. The department lacked rooms and equipment and one of its teachers had not had her contract renewed. During the interview the researcher pointed to a number of computers which were in the music classroom and the teacher observed:

That's all we have...it's quite recent....We have actually that...to promote ICT in the school...But you can tell that all the other departments have got new Macs, and we've got the old ones. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 43)

When the relationship between the Music Department and the school senior management was not positive, as reported by this teacher, some suggested ways to find resources for instruments and extra-curricular activities were making use of the pupils own instruments (e.g. running a Turkish instrumental group, Appendix V, question 37) and getting bids from outside agencies:

We have actually just got a bid to get some new decks and equipment for...a core group of MC DJ...It's the most fast growing popular music club, nation-wide...We had a visiting artist come last year, and it was such a huge [success]...we had to

really limit the numbers... We also got a bid from an outside agency to promote the music from certain groups in the school. We have no money FROM the school, we got this money from outside...and that was for the steel pans as well. (Laura. Appendix V. Questions 36 and 39)

Laura explained that schools in the same area shared music resources with her school thanks to an 'exchange partnership' (Appendix V, question 41). This was especially helping local primary schools and a special needs unit which did not have any music resources.

The teachers' observations regarding music pedagogy were coded under the 'Teaching methods' subcategory. This particular subcategory reflects on the comments about the teachers' actions in order to fulfil their role helping to set the environment for creativity. Sometimes these observations overlapped with other subcategories like 'Classroom settings' or 'Teacher's role'. Several issues are explored in this subcategory: the unpredictability of lessons, the teachers' care for the emotional environment, their participatory practices, the care for the pupil's characteristics and the use of questioning as a tool for understanding. These issues were considered with different emphasis by participants and came up repeatedly during the interviews, characterising the descriptions of these teachers' pedagogy.

Patrick observed that his 'carefully planned scheme of work' was a 'starting point'. He acknowledged that teaching 'is not wholly predictable' and that if the lesson goes off in a different way he would 'pick up other things that are important' because teaching is 'drawing upon your skills and experiences' (Appendix V, question 25). This more instinctive pedagogy was advocated by Emma, when describing her way

of working with each of the groups of her composition project (Appendix V, question 16). She also observed the differences between her current teaching and when she first started, with ‘everything written down’ (question 18).

The provision of an appropriate ‘emotional environment’ for pupils was one of the teachers’ aims during the lessons. This had to be ‘relaxed but purposeful’, where the teacher would ‘start the spark going’, getting the attention of the pupils if they were ‘not there’ (Emma, question 59), getting the pupils to perform in front of each other if they were ‘too shy’ (Helen, question 45), and motivating the pupils. This could even be induced through humour (Patrick, Appendix V, question 21).

All participants explained how participatory activities and non-directive practice characterised the pedagogy of the lessons videotaped (e.g. Sarah, end of question 37). They observed that group-work aided the involvement of all pupils (e.g. Emma, question 9) – a subcategory regarding group processes is examined in the next section. They would help pupils rather than ‘dictating them what to do’ (Helen, Appendix V, question 17), not giving them ‘too many ideas’ and letting them work on their own. Emma observed this pedagogy ‘empowers’ the pupils, which would be ‘very aware it is not their piece’ if she pushed too much into their compositions (question 17). All teachers, however, agreed they would give pupils some musical illustrations, particularly at the beginning of the units (see examples in section 4), as well as during the projects if pupils were having difficulties.

Another methodological issue that came up several times during the interviews was the teachers’ care for the pupil’s previous knowledge and different styles of learning.

Patrick observed he would look at the pupils' work, trying to understand 'where they are coming from' (question 17) and sometimes modify the activity depending on the pupils (question 11). Participants would go around the classroom to check if pupils had understood (e.g. Elaine, question 10), and Sarah adopted a similar procedure and also checked pupils' previous musical experiences at the beginning of the school year (Sarah, question 67).

The last issue considered in the 'Teachers methods' subcategory is the use of questioning by participants throughout their lessons. Teachers observed that questioning the students about their work facilitated the understanding of concepts, the development of music skills, and the necessary agreement between pupils and teacher on what was to be assessed. This 'conversational' pedagogy was a common characteristic of these teachers, with plenty of such examples during their lessons (see for example comments by Elaine, Appendix V, question 37 and Patrick, question 28).

Regarding the 'Physical environment' category, all participants observed that availability of space and instruments, and the quality of the general facilities, were essential for the production of 'good work'. For instance, Patrick stated that good facilities create a positive expectation from the start, making 'a big difference' in the quality of the pupils' work:

The instruments we have cost quite a lot of money, but...make a very good sound. If [they] were falling apart...[the pupils'] response would also be...'this is not very good'...[And] the space is very important...We are lucky we have the opportunities for whole class work...paired work on keyboards and so on...When I first came

here, we didn't have as much space...and the quality of work suffered. So...it makes a big difference. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 5)

Another teacher suggested that not only the physical environment had an influence in the pupils' outcome but also the actual layout of the classrooms:

How the pupils see the environment, whether they think it's attractive, and stimulating...will have an effect because...the success which they are able to achieve in the classroom...is largely dependant upon the state of surroundings. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 12)

Some comments about the improvements that could be made in the participants' music departments had to do with practice rooms and further development of ICT facilities (e.g. Patrick, Appendix V, question 58; Laura, question 43). These comments were grouped under the 'Complaints and proposals for improvement' subcategory. Two teachers, who did not have access to a separate arts block, voiced their concerns during the interviews, and wished they had one with specifically designed classrooms for music (e.g. Laura, Appendix V, question 12 and 34; Sarah, question 82). Laura was also worried about budget cuts in her school, and the fact that another music teacher in her department had not been able to have her contract renewed; this had increased the class size to thirty. The fact that the money to buy the instruments had come from an outside agency together with the struggle to find resources and space in the school, was described by this teacher as 'a battle' (Laura, Appendix V, question 34). Even the teachers with better facilities wished they had more and bigger rooms or more resources. For example, Helen wished she had more headphones (Appendix V, question 83), and Emma wanted more practice rooms to avoid sharing them with other classrooms during some time periods (Emma, Appendix V, question 6).

An additional subcategory within the physical environment was 'Classroom settings'. This included the teachers' descriptions of the classroom organisation and the specific use of rooms and instruments during the videotaped activities. Two of the teachers observed that it was important to spend time setting up at the beginning of the lessons:

If physically things are not right...or things are in the way, then it would just cause disruption later on. So, it's worth spending the time at the beginning. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 2)

Another factor to take into account was the choice of instruments and grouping of the pupils, depending on the activity and the students:

We were looking at melodic improvisation, and so the way that I decided to do was using the tuned percussion and to work on that as a class. So that we could hear each other's work. And I was playing the ostinato backing chords....Most of them are much more fluent in playing, on the percussion instruments. So, for the Year 7 class that made it easier.... At other times they will do improvising in small groups. So what they could've done, as a follow up to this, for example, would be for them to go off into smaller groups. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 4)

What emerges from the participants' explanations is that they helped to create the climate for developing musical creativity with the use of the space and resources, depending on the activity, the style of learning and the music level of the students. In a unit on pop song composition with a Year 9 group with another teacher, the pupils spent more than half of the time in the practice rooms. The teacher commented that this type of composition particularly required this classroom setting, allowing the students to be 'in charge':

Because it's pop songs, there is a different structure from, say, a different type of composition. And I think...it is quite a difficult one because a lot of it is not just about structure, and because they are working as a group rather than just one individual. (...) The practice rooms...give them the space, so that I am out of their hair...They get a chance to be in charge. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 4 and 6)

A participant working with another Year 9 class, used electric keyboards in four practice rooms as well as along the walls of the main classroom. Pupils were paired or worked individually at the keyboards. Students were asked to come up with a 12 bar improvisation in the middle of a blues tune given by the teacher, and as she explained, she used this classroom setting because she felt 'that the set up of the lesson' allowed her to 'work quite individually with students' (Elaine, Appendix V, question 10). This comment goes back to the issue of the pupils' individual learning examined earlier in section 2, and illustrates how teachers can facilitate the climate for developing musical creativity.

#### **8.4 - The creative process in action: teachers' descriptions of their lessons**

In the previous chapter it was noted that participants had relatively little to say about the process from the conceptual point of view. They were more forthcoming when discussing the creative process with reference to their practice. The teachers' descriptions of the activities observed during the lessons were categorised under 'Different activities'. Five of the teachers commented they would start the units involving composition and improvisation with a similar aim for the first lesson: to introduce the students to the music genre of the project, and to prepare the students to make their own music. This was done by means of various listening, appraising and



performing activities. These included analysing choruses of successful pop songs at the beginning of a unit on pop song composition (Emma, Appendix V, question 3), looking at particular films and genres at the beginning of a unit on composition for film scenes (Laura, questions 4 and 5), listening to jazz recordings at the beginning of a unit on introduction to improvisation and jazz (Elaine, questions 1 and 4) and learning to perform a twelve-bar Blues walking bass pattern at the beginning of a unit on Blues improvisation (Sarah, question 2).

As pointed out in section 2, the way teachers moved on from the introductory activities to the final outcome of the units varied depending on the type of composition/improvisation work and the students. The idea of having different procedures for engaging the pupils was expressed by one of the teachers:

Having taught the lesson previously, and in different ways, I was trying...that those pupils who were struggling...could find a way in that was a bit easier...You kind of discover those things...you think it through in terms of new classes and the individuals within it...sometimes you modify as you find what works and what doesn't. So, I'm just trying to find a way in which I can engage everybody. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 17)

When pupils were working in groups teachers observed some positive interactions. These comments were coded under a new category (i.e. 'Group process'). It was observed by three teachers that group dynamics could improve the quality of the pupils' work and produce a positive effect between pupils. For example, a teacher referred to the musical 'negotiation' going on between a pair of pupils trying out their own tune on the keyboard (Sarah, third video extract, Appendix V, p. 413). These two students experimented with different melodies following the Blues

structure, and after some practising, they were offered some advice by the teacher, who was going around the class observing and talking with the students. At the end of the lesson they performed their tune, then with the composed solo part almost finished, in front of their classmates. This teacher explained the music 'negotiation' between this pair of pupils as follows:

They're having to listen and problem-solve....They'll stumble across something they like and they'll hold on to it...or the other [student] may say 'well, I think that doesn't work'. That's the kind of negotiation. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 23)

The above teacher observed that working in groups gives more incentive to the teamwork side, because the pupils compare their work with the work of other groups (Sarah, Appendix V, question 8). Moreover, some pupils were perceived to encourage other group peers who did not feel as confident in composing. One teacher commenting on her videotaped lessons put it like this:

In that last group that we saw there were some particular personalities...that encouraged the students who weren't as good as those students, that whatever they were able to do was going to be accepted... I know some of the students were looking at the other students, who they felt were more able to give them ideas...you could see that. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 22)

Another example of good group dynamics was videotaped in a lesson with Sarah (Appendix V, fifth video extract, p. 418). A pupil refused to play during a lesson on Blues improvisation, and was then helped by another student, working on the same keyboard for the rest of the lesson. At the end of the lesson the first pupil played his solo in front of the class. The teacher described this extract as follows:

[He] didn't have the confidence to have a go, he was very very frightened by it...but...[the other pupil] is right in there and say 'look I'll help you' and has enough musical confidence to feel that he can help him...I think [the other pupil] kind of unlocked his confidence...What he did...wasn't what I'd asked them to do, but at least...once you've got something you can refine it, if you haven't got anything, you can't refine anything. So...[it] was an achievement, especially as he'd actually point-blank refused to do it before. (Sarah. Appendix V. Questions 55 and 56)

The idea of getting help and feedback from other students is linked with the differentiation between 'individual' and 'relative' originality. Working in a group pupils are 'testing' their 'individual' originality against the 'relative' originality of their peers, receiving feedback from them. The pupils then develop, feeding from the ideas of other students, and they may progress a little further than if they were working on their own during the same period of time:

If they feedback to each other...they get more ideas...being inspired by each other rather than me having to say 'oh what about this and what about that? (Emma. Appendix V. Question 6)

As the same teacher explained, these group dynamics can accelerate the process of creation, and they function as an incentive amongst group members:

Because they are working as a group rather than just one individual there is a lot of group dynamic in there, and I think more than anything else...it is about them working off each other and finding, hopefully catching that moment when it just sort of sets fire somehow. It happens at different times with every group. And there was one group today who just got to that point, six weeks later [from the beginning of the project] they suddenly went 'they got it', and it came together whatever it was, and they were completely fired up. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 4)

On the other hand, a few pupils in some groups appeared to ‘sit back’ and participate less than their peers. This happened when some students were taking the lead in a group project, coming up with the ideas, and leaving particular students in a secondary role within the group. It was explained as follows:

[The key members] may’ve been taking a more major part in the group, and I don’t think that was a problem...because...I didn’t see any group where anybody was overpowering anybody else with their ideas. It was just that somebody naturally was coming up with...more ideas than other people.... It may mean that some other people in the group were sitting back. That’s my only thing....there were certain groups where other people were feeling insecure...just sitting back, not actually participating. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 49)

As suggested in the above quotation, this teacher perceived the pupils that were ‘sitting back’ as being less musically confident. It has already been observed in the previous section that the development of the pupils’ confidence is an important issue regarding the teachers’ role.

### **8.5 - The pupils’ products: teachers’ considerations on music style and conventions**

The six teachers acknowledged that they were aware of working within given music styles. These comments were categorised under ‘Music style and conventions’. Participants emphasised musical conventions when assessing the work by students. The aim of this assessment was to identify particular musical features that had been previously taught. Patrick referred to the process of teaching music conventions as ‘teaching pupils to hear’. Commenting on a lesson on rondo improvisation with tuned percussion instruments this teacher observed:

The way that they are hearing...is the way that I've taught it...by thinking about the rhythm...and...break[ing] down the music in that way. And I believe that ultimately, [it] will be a useful way in which to develop their musical creativity or imagination. (Patrick, Appendix V. Question 28)

In doing this, two teachers were concerned that in some way they could be dismissing the pupils' creativity. One teacher put it like this:

I might be dismissing their ideas by...suggesting that other ideas are better. And I am aware of doing that, but then I suppose I'm trying to teach some sort of style...I'm not dismissing them...but sometimes, if I suggest a change, they themselves will say, oh yes, that sounds better. (Elaine. Appendix V. Questions 19 and 20)

Another teacher explained her concerns as follows:

If you mark, you are modifying pupils' work, you are actually taking away some of their creativity, because you are inherently working within norms. I think there's a lot to think about... (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 20)

The above teacher observed that assessment of both composition and performance was linked to convention. Interpreting a piece, for example, the performers can be creative in the psychological sense but they are still 'aware of conventions' and 'common practice' (Sarah, Appendix V, question 28). As noted in Chapter 7 (p.161), teachers were looking for a 'sense of style' when assessing the students' work during the units videotaped:

I would...[give] an A\* if they did something which was really...stylish. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 35)

[In] the top mark...there is a real sense of style...the ideas have developed on and they know. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 71)

Elaine observed that in looking for that 'sense of style' she was teaching a tradition:

By saying to them something like, 'if you come back to this note your piece will sound finished off, and more complete'...you are sort of teaching a tradition...and style. And in doing so, you are...intervening in a way that makes the tune sound better, but at the same time you want them to be able to hear that it sounds better. So, in other words...I don't just accept their ideas, at face value, I try to intervene. And I don't know if that's right or not...? (Elaine. Appendix V. Questions 40 and 41)

At the same time, this teacher observed that students already know what sounds 'right' because they are listening to music outside school that is part of a received cultural tradition. She amplified this view:

The thing is that if you don't [intervene], some of them will produce pieces of music that when you play them back on the tape, others will laugh at, because they can recognise that it doesn't sound right. They may not be able to know why, but they have enough sort of musical 'know-how'...to recognise something sounds wrong. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 42)

This received tradition, including the music that students listen to inside and outside school, appeared to have a bearing not only on the teachers' assessment of the pupils' outcome but also on the pupils' motivation and confidence. These issues were examined within the environment theme in the previous chapter (section 4).

## 8.6 – Conclusion

The remaining categories and subcategories emerging from the analysis of the interviews have been examined in this chapter, with the focus on practical issues regarding the teaching of music. Participants observed that in music composition and improvisation activities pupils demonstrate different learning styles (i.e. adaptor and innovator). The issue for the teacher is how to cope with different learning styles in the same classroom. The subcategories 'Teachers' role' and 'Teaching methods', from the 'Emotional environment' category, illustrate how these teachers coped with this issue.

Participants observed that having good relations with the other teachers and support from the Head teacher was important in keeping alive a positive music school environment ('School culture'). The use of the 'Physical environment' to facilitate the climate for developing musical creativity was also considered. Participants perceived they could help to create this climate with the use of space and resources, depending on the activity, the style of learning and the level of musical development of the students. Four teachers emphasised this issue giving illustrative examples from their practices.

These teachers perceived that composing at Key Stage 3 was not necessarily an individual process, and suggested positive group dynamics between pupils. This is a topic that has been recently discussed and one writer, Odam (2000), has argued against the value of these activities. However, for these teachers, these activities were considered crucial.

Finally, it is suggested that stylistic music conventions shaped the assessment of the pupils' work. The music style and the received cultural tradition would influence both teachers and pupils, during the lessons and the creative process. All of these teachers recognised the need to guide pupils in accordance with the rules and procedures of the discipline. Nevertheless, this was an issue that for some teachers was problematic because they felt they might be in danger of inhibiting the pupils' creativity.

The next chapter is concerned with the similarities and differences between these teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education and the literature on the subject.



# CHAPTER 9

## THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS COMPARED WITH THE LITERATURE

## **CHAPTER 9. THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS COMPARED WITH THE LITERATURE**

### **9.1 – Introduction**

In chapters 7 and 8 the teachers' perceptions have been examined. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the second research question: *What are the similarities and differences between the literature on creativity and these teachers' perceptions?*

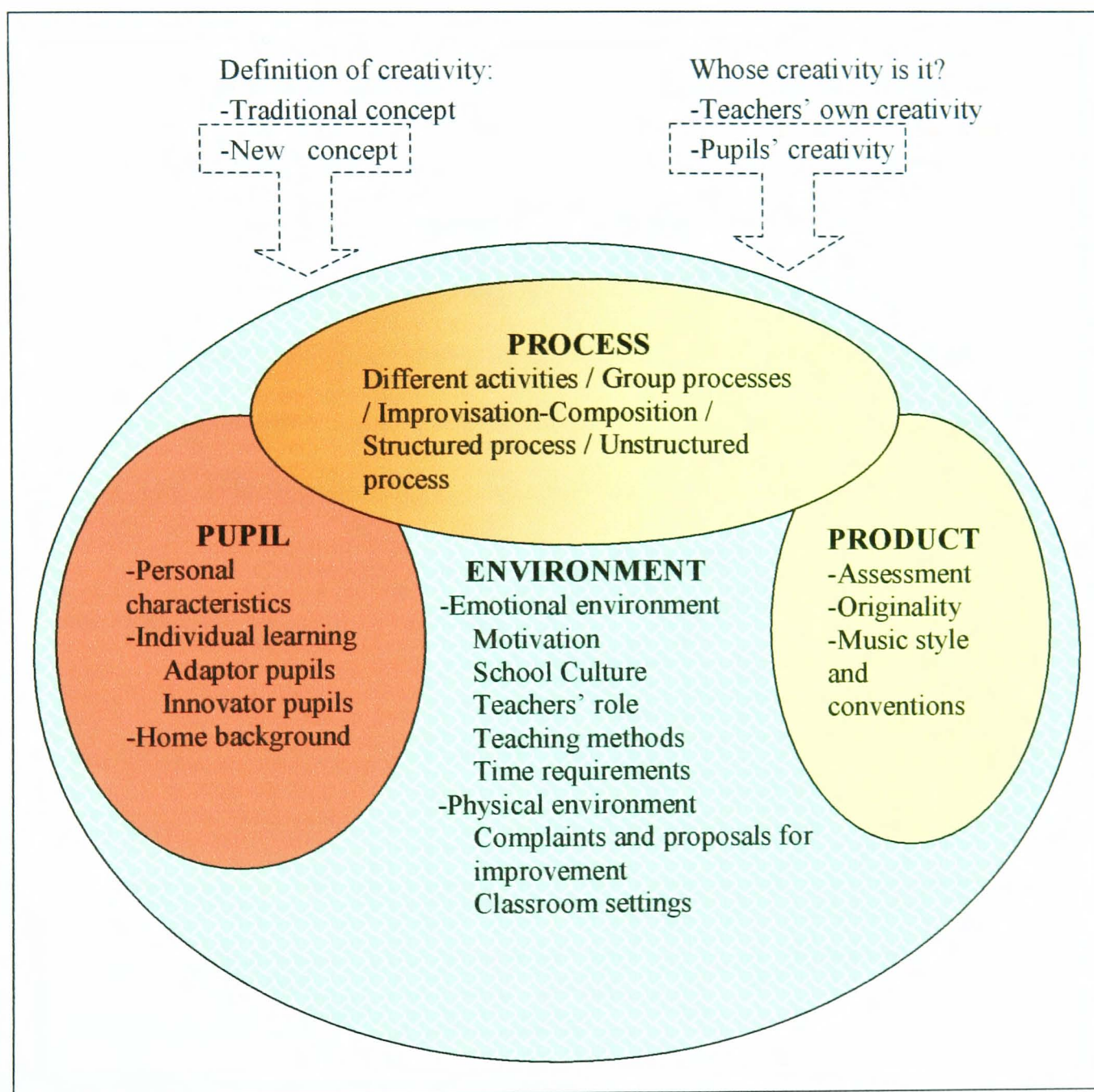
After some general observations, the four original themes of the framework are considered in sections 3 to 6. The teachers' own creativity is examined separately in section 7.

### **9.2 - Teachers' perceptions and the literature. Some general observations**

In Chapter 7, section 2, it is suggested that the definition of creativity needs to be considered before going into the four themes of the framework. It is apparent from the teachers' interviews that they made comments beyond the four themes, which are discussed separately (the full development of the original framework is presented in Figure 9.1 on the next page). An analysis of the conversations reveals that teachers understood creativity in different ways and were aware of the complexity of the concept. It is suggested that the participants' perceptions exemplified, although in different ways, the idea of creativity as a capacity of all students, indicating that they viewed creativity in terms of what Elliott describes as the 'new concept' (Chapter 2, section 2). This view, previously observed in the pilot study, is widely found in

contemporary educational literature such as NACCCE (1999) and Duffy (1998), as discussed in the third section of Chapter 1.

*Figure 9.1 Developing the original framework*



Even though all teachers considered that creativity could be developed in all pupils, it is suggested that they did not agree on how creativity was to be described. Three participants did not have a developed idea of the word, and two of them pointed out

that the National Curriculum was not free of this conceptual confusion. All these comments raise issues concerned with the production of National guidelines for teaching. In our ordinary language traditionally creativity is considered as a gift owned by a few people. If teachers are to develop policies in which creativity is of relevance to all children, a differentiation between the traditional concept of creativity and the notion of 'imaginative thinking' may be needed. In order to avoid conceptual confusion, it seems reasonable to assume that what is meant by the word 'creativity' needs to be considered further in future guidelines. Because of the complexity of the term nevertheless, guidelines will always have different interpretations. This issue, alongside all the rest of observations regarding the National Curriculum made by participants, is further examined in Chapter 11 (section 3) devoted to educational implications.

### **9.3 - Creative pupils**

Regarding the teacher's comments on creative pupils, it is observed that they were described as 'able to pick up the ideas quickly' and 'develop them', able to practice hard and 'use the time', and able 'to adapt the task in a more individual way'. These comments are in keeping with the ideas suggested by Jones (1984) and Cropley (1992) regarding general creativity, without referring to any field or activity in particular (e.g. science or arts). They characterise the creative individual as somebody who displays 'flexibility' and 'independence of judgement'. Some of the skills facilitating creativity were pointed out in the third section of Chapter 2 as follows:

Ability to restate a problem in new terms which provide new insights.

Ability to generate large number of relevant ideas, after having pinpointed, analysed, and defined the problem.

Ability to change the line of thinking and switch to a new approach.

Ability to generate novel and unusual ideas.

(Adapted from Cropley, 1992: 16)

Cropley argues that apart from special cognitive processes, creative individuals display similar personal traits. Drawing on recent studies he describes the creative personality as impulsive, non-conformist and capable of sustained hard work, coupled with a desire to seek change and adventure. The creative thinker, suggests Cropley, tends to avoid adherence to restrictive schedules and may show a certain disregard for observing details of plans and rules. A combination of these traits can lead to apparently disorganised behaviour. This is one of the reasons why creative children may be difficult to handle in the classroom. This is an issue that is not discussed in the music curriculum literature which gives little consideration to the pupils' diverse behaviour. The teachers in this study observed they tried to work individually with pupils, taking into account their particular characteristics. These would include the pupils' different levels of musical development, personalities and learning styles.

Two different types of creative pupils were suggested, the 'introverted' and the 'extroverted'. Emma's description of the latter seems to match the apparently disorganised behaviour of some creative individuals as described by Cropley (1992). The challenge for the music teacher is that 'both have to be nurtured...and it's very easy to miss one group either way' (Emma, question 35). It is worth mentioning here that the creative personality is described by Cropley (1992), Fryer (1996) and Kemp

(1996) with lists of traits that do not seem to be in line with all the cases reported by participants in the present study. The difference between practice and the literature is one of the main issues discussed in the second section of Chapter 11, 'Research, theory and practice'.

Four teachers observed that pupils experience music activities with different ways of learning. The pupils' different learning styles identified by participants were categorised in Chapter 8 as 'Adaptor' and 'Innovator'. It was suggested that if teachers have pupils with different ways of learning in the same classroom, the same activity could be affecting students in different ways. A study by Brinkman (1999), reviewed in Chapter 4 (section 4), investigated the effect of different music composition activities on the students' music products. Two groups of students, 'adaptor' and 'innovator', completed the following exercises (see p. 81 for a full explanation):

- a) *Open problem*: compose a melody.
- b) *Closed problem*: compose a melody that uses mostly white keys on the keyboard, is in three-four time, is energetic, and is approximately 12 to 20 measures long.

In the composition portion of the study, Open and Closed Problem Instruction Sheets...synthesizers...[and] cassette tapes...were used. (Brinkman, 1999: 63)

Three judges rated each melody using a seven-point scale on craftsmanship, aesthetic value and originality. Although no significant differences were found between the students' grades, the group categorised as 'adaptors' received higher scores in the closed exercise, whereas the 'innovators' received higher scores in the open problem. The students were also asked which piece they liked doing the most. Contrary to the equal distribution of 16 students in each group, the open composition was chosen by

26 students and the closed by 6. Brinkman observed that this finding was in line with research by Smith (1993), who found a preference for 'unprompted' or open composition in a study of piano students. As a possible explanation, Brinkman (1999: 67) suggested that open and closed problems in his research were not equally appealing, and that the idea of 'open composition' could overrule what 'match(es) up best with the creativity style of the student'. Even though he described this as 'puzzling', this outcome is of value for music educators. Four of the teachers participating in the present study observed that the majority of their students were excited and engaged throughout the units videotaped, which had different degrees of 'open' composition activities. This finding is along the lines of the cases reported by Smith (1993) and Brinkman (1999) regarding pupils' preference for open composition exercises.

On the other hand, there are pupils who prefer working within a set of music parameters, and find it difficult to come up with the initial ideas when a music activity is openly defined. For this type of student, closed activities with a range of set instructions seemed more appropriate to develop their musical creativity. The issue for music teachers, then, is how to cope with the different learning styles in any given classroom. Borrowing Entwistle's (1981, 1991) terms, some pupils prefer to work following small steps in a 'serialist' style of learning, and others learn in a 'holist' way, taking the activity as a whole. The former can be compared with 'adaptor' pupils and the latter with 'innovator' pupils (i.e. the ones who work more comfortably without a set of prescribed steps to follow). What emerges from the pupils' preference for unprompted composition, is the suggestion for teachers to start with open composition, offering at the same time support for those who feel

uncomfortable with this. In an opposite setting, when working with closed composition because of students' needs or teachers' choice, educators will probably need to leave an open door for more 'innovator' students, as with the case illustrated by Elaine in the second section of Chapter 8.

Another factor to take into account, as pointed out by four participants, is the level of musical development of the students and the need to adapt teaching to the previous learning of pupils. Participants explained they tried to work individually with students to find ways of engaging everybody. In summary, these teachers perceived two major factors to take into account regarding the pupils' individual differences: the different ways of learning and the different levels of musical development. It might be suggested that these two issues are rarely identified in the music curriculum literature. In fact, the term 'individual differences' is interpreted in the literature in different ways. Swanwick (1999: 54-55) acknowledges that different 'social and personal worlds' come into action when working with composing activities. He emphasises the importance of caring 'for the musical discourse of students'. Describing this principle, he suggests the need to offer 'integrated musical experiences...linking the activity of composing...with performing and audience-listening' to allow the different musical discourses of students to flourish. These differences, nevertheless, refer to the musical pathways and the 'social and personal worlds' of the pupils, and he does not specifically refer to any learning styles. Witchel (2001) also acknowledges the pupils' differences, referring to them as 'individual needs', and advocates for 'planning for differentiation'. He states that 'although composing in the curriculum involves all pupils, it does not necessarily address their individual needs' (p. 201). The term here could be interpreted as individual ways of



learning, but he does not engage in analysing the different learning strategies of pupils. Instead he assumes that the problem is ‘essentially an organisational one, especially in secondary schools’, and offers some guidelines to improve the organisation of composing as a classroom activity, such as breaking down the composing task into manageable portions, demonstrating the concepts being explored, balancing between whole-class, group and individual learning, and timing carefully the activity (Witchel, 2001: 201-202). Like Paynter (1982, 1992) and Odam (2000), individual learning is considered in terms of the pupils’ different musical development. In doing this, current music curriculum writers tend to undervalue the teacher’s role, focussing on organisational issues and suggestions for practice. This in turn devalues the role of the teachers as professionals in charge of making educational judgements regarding practice in the classroom settings. It has been observed by Plummeridge (1991: 123) that teachers are ‘required to *transform* inert materials and prescribed outlines into vital and dynamic encounters’. They are the ones who make the connections ‘between the worlds of music and music education’. The participants’ comments illustrate how they adapt the activities to the pupils’ characteristics, including their different learning styles. But to find references on different ways of learning it is necessary to go to the general education literature (cf. Entwistle, 1991) and psychology studies. Music educators have little to say about this very important issue.

#### **9.4 – The environment for creativity**

Comments on the most appropriate environment to enhance creativity were coded under two broad categories within the ‘Environment’ theme: ‘Emotional environment’ and ‘Physical environment’. The emotional environment was characterised as an emotional climate where pupils could feel confident playing their compositions and improvisations in front of their peers without fear of disapproval. ‘Confidence’ was seen as essential for developing and exhibiting creativity. The idea of a ‘nice atmosphere’ or ‘safe environment’ where pupils feel free to show their compositions or improvise, can be regarded as part of the ‘emotional climate’ as described by Beetlestone (1998). In Chapter 2 (section 4) explanations by several writers regarding the ideal environment in which to develop creativity have been examined. Some authors give descriptions of the classroom ethos or climate for such development. Beetlestone (1998) describes three aspects that form the classroom climate, namely the physical climate, the intellectual climate and the emotional climate. Some of her advice in order to enhance pupils’ originality – which she sees as the main aspect of creativity – is the provision of an emotional classroom environment where pupils feel safe to take risks and to experiment without frequent fear of failure. To this end, the pupils’ effort needs to be rewarded.

Teachers commented they would support the pupils’ motivation by means of providing a ‘positive experience’ where students had both ‘enjoyment’ and ‘something to take away’, the emphasis being on ‘doing and engaging’. Participants observed the students’ feeling of ‘ownership’ of their work developed specially during projects carried over a number of weeks, and this was particularly beneficial

in retaining pupils' motivation. This was also suggested in Chapter 2 when examining the intellectual climate. It was observed that children have to be challenged in order to stimulate their abilities, always taking into account the capabilities of the pupils.

A subcategory called 'Time requirements' was defined in Chapter 7, which focused on the negative relationship between 'time pressures' and the appropriate atmosphere for developing the pupils' creativity to the full. This negative relationship emerged when anxiety was brought onto teacher and pupils, distorting or even breaking the appropriate environment for creativity. These concerns are in line with findings of previous studies discussed in Chapter 4, and in particular the work of Fryer (1996), who interviewed teachers of several curricular subjects in an enquiry of teachers' attitudes on creativity.

Additional categories and subcategories were presented in Chapter 8: three subcategories of the 'Emotional environment' ('Teachers' role', 'School culture' and 'Teaching methods'), the category 'Physical environment', and its two subcategories 'Complaints and proposals for improvement' and 'Classroom settings'. Participants described their role when teaching composition and improvisation as 'nurturer' and 'facilitator', sometimes just setting up the conditions in which pupils could explore their ideas. The 'School culture' was examined, including comments on the schools' music activities and its aims, and the status of the Music Department within the school. Four participants observed that the classroom music experiences at Key Stage 3 were crucial for the subsequent choice of subjects at a later stage. One of these teachers commented that the school culture was important for the provision of

‘uplifting’ music experiences that pupils would ‘remember when they leave school’. Participants explained their worries regarding pupils being ‘left out’ from school ensembles and offered several activities that were regarded as accessible to all students including ‘junk bands’, choirs, rock groups, and ‘talent shows’. They commented that receiving support from the school management when needed was important in keeping alive this positive music school culture. One case was reported by one of the teachers where the relations between the Music Department and the school senior management were not positive. Regarding the ‘Teaching methods’ category, issues such as the unpredictability of lessons, the care for the pupil’s characteristics and the use of questioning as a tool for understanding came up repeatedly during the interviews.

It is apparent that there is little reference to the above issues in the literature, particularly studies that focus on under-resourced music departments and poor relations between some departments and the school senior management. The music education literature reviewed in Part One that would seem to be relevant for this issue tends to focus on curriculum policies or music education theories. The curriculum guidelines documentation and the few investigations on practice available generally examine ‘good examples’ for practice where the ‘positive music school culture’ is taken for granted. For example the report *Arts Education in Secondary Schools: Effects and Effectiveness*, published by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Harland *et al*, 2000), investigates the effectiveness of music education in five schools ‘with reputations for good practices in the provision of arts education’ (Harland *et al*, 2000: 6).

Teachers observed that availability of space and instruments, and the quality of the general facilities were essential for the production of 'good work'. These comments were categorised under 'Physical environment'. Teachers wished they had more and bigger rooms and more resources. These concerns are not far from those described by Paynter (1982: 155-161) drawing from interviews with music teachers involved in the Schools Council Secondary Music Project in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In his study, Paynter observed that teachers stressed the need for music to be recognised as a practical subject, with a type of 'workshop' accommodation rather than conventional classrooms. It was pointed out that designs of rooms would need to be flexible, covering individual, small and large-group activities, and work with tape-recorder/electric instruments. The facilities in the music department as a whole were also considered, stressing the need for a variety of rooms, audio equipment, classroom, orchestral and band instruments.

Another subcategory presented within the physical environment was 'Classroom settings'. Two participants commented that it was important to spend time setting up at the beginning of the lessons involving composition and improvisation. Several examples were outlined, which illustrated the teachers' perception that they could help to create the climate for developing creativity with the use of space and resources, depending on the activity, the style of learning and the music level of the students.

It was pointed out in Chapter 2, nevertheless, that educators had a key role in creating the right climate or 'setting the stage'. Beetlestone (1998) suggests that creativity should start with the teacher and not with the classroom setting. Craft

(1997) supports this view and says that educators, being at the centre of the creative process, are the ones who fully develop students learning experiences. Craft also highlights the importance of encouraging pupils' experimentation, openness and risk-taking, allowing students to make mistakes. She notes, however, that giving children 'space' is not to say that structure is unimportant. Even so, organisational factors such as accommodation and equipment were regarded as important by all of these teachers, with some placing high priority on these aspects of teaching.

### **9.5 - The creative process**

Participants did not appear to have a clear perception of their pupils' creative process. Their comments were focussed mainly on practice and the steps followed by pupils to complete the requirements of the music lessons. It is observed in Chapter 7, section 5, that improvisation was seen as a step prior to composition, or as part of the preliminary stages in the compositional process. This would be in accordance with some of the suggestions by Burnard (2000), regarding the pupils' different ways of perceiving improvisation and composition. In her study she found that pupils would sometimes see composition and improvisation as 'differently orientated activities', and other times 'as interrelated entities' where improvisation was used in the process of composing (Burnard, 2000: 20).

The processes of improvising and composing were perceived as structured, with different degrees of organisation. One participant suggested three stages in teaching improvisation, i.e. setting up, playing and reflecting. The teachers commented they would normally start composition units by introducing the pupils to the style and

forms concerned (if any) with music examples. They would give pupils tasks and time to explore them for themselves. These initial activities might be placed within the first and second stages of Wallas's (1926) theory (i.e. Preparation and Incubation). Pupils would then be asked to work towards a specific goal, and at the end teacher and pupils would examine and reflect on the characteristics of the pupils' work and their success in achieving the original goal. The work towards the completion of the composition and the final evaluation might be seen as the third and fourth of Wallas's stages (Illumination and Verification). Other relevant views regarding the process of creating, which are drawn from Wallas's ideas, can also be applied, including Durrant and Welch's (1995: 30) 'composition helix' and Berkley's (2001: 124) 'generating-realising-editing' composing process activities. Furthermore, participants considered that the creative process would be influenced by the age of the students and suggested that this process would be linked with their general learning development. There does seem to be a close connection between these teachers' views and the literature on the process. However, participants had relatively little to say about the pupils' process.

At this point, it would be wise to observe that the 'community' to which the pupils' product is shown is restricted to the teacher, the classroom peers and occasionally the parents. Sometimes the pupil's work may be seen as creative only by its author and the teacher, who recognises the improvement from previous work, even if it is not of the same quality of that of the pupil's peers. This type of creativity is called 'individual originality' in the report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education* (NACCCE, 1999: 30). In this report, individual originality is defined as the one that is recognisable when comparing present and previous work by the same

pupil, as opposed to 'relative originality', which is recognisable when comparing the work of similar age pupils.

Five participants observed that in some cases, the process of creativity appeared to operate beyond a given structure ('Unstructured process' category). However, opposite to what might appear, the above category does not illustrate the lack of stages in the pupils' creative process but that this process can run sometimes unnoticed by educators. The comments offered by participants regarding this category, referred particularly to the lack of structure of the input by the teacher. Patrick for example, after watching some video extracts, pointed out the significant improvement of the improvisations of his Year 9 pupils compared with the Year 7s. He was positively surprised because he had been doing very little work on specific improvising skills with the Year 9s. It was previously asserted in Chapter 2 (section 5) that, in Koestler's words, solving a problem means bridging a gap. Koestler (1964) conceives the mind as a pyramid in which skills and habits at various levels and distances from one another can suddenly come into contact. This is what he calls 'bisociative' thinking. The success in bridging these gaps may be conditioned by the level of skills and habits of the students. On the one hand, if the students do not have enough technical skills they may not be able to resolve their music 'problems'; on the other hand, if they have technical skills but they are not used to engage in the study of different possible solutions they may encounter problems in 'bridging the gap'. The role of the music teacher is important in helping pupils to develop this habit.



The teachers' descriptions of their lessons have been examined in Chapter 8, and particular reference has been made to the group composition dynamics observed by participants. Three teachers commented that this type of work could produce a positive effect between pupils receiving feedback from each other. It may be suggested from Emma's lessons that the teacher is not always needed in the same room with the students.

The practice of working with peers in a non-directed way is to be found in string quartets, classical trios and duets, and pop groups – popular musicians' non-directed way of learning has been recently studied by Green (2001). This way of working would facilitate the pupils' involvement in music making. The following quotation exemplifies this point. The video extract that originated this comment presented a group of girls finishing the arrangements of their pop song, working alone in a practice room:

They were all working just like I would expect to see a group of adults working together or any sort of band....Every moment within that [extract], everybody was doing something...[Two pupils] were talking as the music went on about decisions that were made, and other members of the group were nodding. I was really, really delighted to see that happening... (Emma. Appendix V. Question 56)

Some suggestions emerging from the teachers' perceptions of their pupils' composing process, are that it does not need to be necessarily an individual activity. As outlined in Chapter 4, even though other authors supported the idea of composing as primarily an individual activity (e.g. Bennett, 1975, 1976; De Souza Fleith, 2000), their studies focussed on adult and professional composers rather than children and adolescents. Odam (2000) carried out research aimed at identifying effective

composing classroom practice across England. He suggested that much time was wasted in group-work in the schools observed and this contributed to stress in both pupils and teachers. Odam (2000: 123) also suggested the need for teachers to focus on individual projects at the end of secondary school, to adapt to the GCSE music examinations format. But one of the issues that emerge from the present study, although of a different nature than the one undertaken by Odam, is that participants perceived composing group-work as valuable in Key Stage 3, because of the benefits of the feedback between pupils. Participants moreover did not comment that group-work was a stressful feature - in fact they pointed to the lack of availability of practice rooms and resources as their most 'stressful' concerns. All of these teachers were committed to 'creative activities' which involved pupils working in groups.

#### **9.6 - The creative product**

The teachers' perceptions of the pupils' creative products were coded into three categories: 'Assessment', 'Originality' and 'Music style and conventions'. Participants were looking for a 'sense of style' and 'musical awareness' in the students' work in order to give them good marks. These teachers would argue that, to some extent, more creative pupils would achieve highest marks in composition and improvisation. However, two teachers preferred to use terms like 'originality' and 'style' instead of creativity. For them, there were two problems in setting assessment criteria specifically for 'creativity': the lack of a concrete definition of creativity and the difficulty of measuring it. It seems from the variety of views found in the teachers participating in the study, that having a compulsory curriculum does not necessarily unify the views of the practitioners, especially when the topic is a

concept as multifaceted as creativity. All teachers nevertheless, had criteria to assess the pupils' work. This fact corroborates the suggestions from the literature put forward in the second chapter (section 6), regarding the need of norms for making judgements of value. The difficulty in having 'perfect' criteria was not enough reason for the teachers for having them withdrawn. White (1968: 133) observed that the intricacy of spelling out the criteria need 'not be taken to show that such criteria do not exist'. In other words, when assessing products, there is some process of recognition of merit by agreement between individuals, in this case the teachers and their pupils. Indeed, participants suggested that discussing the assessment with the students was essential. This sense of discussion was regarded as a positive tool to make the pupils aware of the qualities of successful work, and was the way to set the criteria with which to assess the work of their peers and their own work.

Regarding the participants' views of originality, they remarked that one of the aims during the videotaped lessons was to get pupils working with 'their own music', their own 'original' songs. In the previous section of the discussion it is observed that the community to which the students' product is shown is usually restricted to the teacher, the classroom peers and occasionally the parents. 'Relative originality' (NACCCE, 1999: 30) is defined as the one that is recognisable when comparing the work of similar age pupils. Therefore, the term 'originality' needs to be seen as 'relative' to the pupils with the same age group. Sometimes only the pupil and his or her teacher, who recognises the pupils' improvement from previous work, may see the pupil's work as original:

It implies 'personal originality'. Because something for a particular individual may be highly creative, in that it is unique and a new experience for them, but within a

wider social context might not be innovative....they could play something which is already, say commercially composed, but they may never have come across that. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 26)

This is called by some authors 'individual originality' (NACCCE, 1999: 30). This originality should be differentiated from what Boden (1990) calls the 'historical originality', or the one that is recognised by a specific 'domain' of the wider society. As explained in previous chapters, Csikszentmihalyi (1996: 6) suggests that to understand the product originated in the creative process it is necessary to consider creativity as the result of the interaction of three elements: the culture containing the symbolic rules, an individual who brings novelty into the domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation. The theory outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1994 and 1996) refers nonetheless to the adult world of professional artists and scientists; the school setting does not fully accommodate into his theory.

In Chapter 8, section 5, the considerations about music style and the conventions within which participants felt they were teaching have been examined. The six teachers acknowledged that they were aware of working within given music styles. These included teaching music conventions and looking for particular features when assessing the music products of the students. In doing this, two teachers were concerned that in some way they could be dismissing the pupils' creativity. It was suggested that students already 'know' what sounds 'right' because they are listening to music outside school that is part of a received cultural tradition. This received musical tradition was perceived to have an effect not only on the teachers' assessment of the pupils' outcome, but on two further issues: the motivation of the

students and the confidence of some ‘classically trained’ pupils when confronted with composing activities within a popular music style.

The first issue, the students’ motivation, was examined in Chapter 7 (section 4) along with the participants’ perceptions on how to maximise it. As noted in Chapter 3 the use of popular music in the classroom came into the English primary and secondary schools during the 1960s and 70s. An increasing number of books dealing with this topic were published during that period, for example the ones by Vulliamy and Lee (1976, 1982) and Swanwick (1968). The advantages of using music that was close to the pupils’ tastes and was available to them via the media were outlined in the literature, extending the use of popular music into the classroom. Some of the observations by participants in the present enquiry appear to back up these advantages:

It is something they know...and...they are actually participating on another level if they like it already. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 11 and 12)

Recent music education studies (e.g. Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves, 2001) highlight that the majority of secondary school children prefer to listen to popular rather than classical music at school. The preference for popular music by older pupils, as described in the present enquiry, seems to support these suggestions. However, this is contentious, as exemplified with those pupils that did not cope so well with popular types of music.

The second issue, the lack of ‘confidence’ of classically trained pupils when confronted with popular music, was perceived by Emma as less of a problem. She

reckoned these pupils were only 'about ten per cent...in each class' (Emma, Appendix V, question 22). This is not to say that she was not taking care of these pupils. In fact the two issues can be regarded as the opposite features of the same puzzle. This is not considered in the music curriculum literature, which often either ignores the pupils' preferences or directly takes their familiarity with pop music for granted. The pupils with strong classical training and limited popular music background were perceived by Emma to find the pop song composition project difficult, contrary to other pupils, who found it a 'very...natural process' because they were much more familiar with 'the pop tradition' (question 22). Therefore both types of pupils could be seen as having a - different - cultural tradition. It was the teacher then, who was responsible for balancing the music activities to reach both types of pupils. The issue of the received cultural tradition of pupils appeared to be significant for this teacher, in addition of the different styles of learning of pupils, as examined in Chapter 8. Ultimately, all participants had to manage classrooms with pupils with different backgrounds and learning styles. Is not clear nevertheless, that all teachers were equally aware of these issues, and this appeared to have an effect on their ideas about music teaching. Some interesting relationships appeared between these teachers' ideas and their musical and professional backgrounds, which are discussed in the next chapter.

### **9.7 - The teachers' own creativity**

A new category was defined in connection with the 'Teachers' own creativity', and was located outside the original four-fold framework (see Figure 9.1, section 2). Three of the teachers in the present study complained about their lack of training in

either composing or the teaching of composing skills. A further differentiation between the teachers' creativity as musicians and their creativity as teachers was also introduced. Participants considered themselves pedagogically creative and some commented that teaching gave them opportunities to fulfil this creativity. One teacher (Patrick) indicated that the current educational emphasis on planning (as set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) was not in line with his style of teaching. This comment raises a further issue concerned with classroom organisation. The emphasis on planning, as Patrick observed, could be hindering the opportunities for the teachers' development of their pedagogical creativity. With newly qualified teachers in particular, the responsibility to plan all their lessons with aims and objectives and to 'tick off' the results at the end, may take away some of the unpredictability of the teaching and learning process. Over twenty-five years ago Stenhouse (1975) pointed out several criticisms of the objectives model of curriculum that are still relevant to contemporary practice. He observed that having pre-specified explicit goals 'prevents the teacher from taking advantage of instructional opportunities unexpectedly occurring in the classroom' (p. 73), and proposed that teachers should have a central role in the development of their curriculum, considering each teacher as a researcher and each classroom as a laboratory (p. 142). The participants' comments regarding the influence of the statutory National Curriculum on their schools' music curriculum is examined in the third section of Chapter 11, 'Curriculum documentation and practice'.

A further point that emerged from the study, regarding the teachers' own creativity, was the suggestion that pupils can have a positive influence in the development of the teachers' own creativity as musicians (Emma, questions 40 and 42). This

resonates with the work of Schafer (1975: 2), again produced over twenty-five years ago, who observed that working with composing activities in the classroom there are no teachers, only 'a company of learners'.

## **9.8 - Conclusion**

These teachers' perceptions regarding practical issues, such as the pupils' different learning styles, are to be found very little in the music education literature. Moreover, the creative personality is described in the literature with lists of traits which do not always match the descriptions by participants.

Although the general literature on creativity gives educators a key role in setting the emotional environment for creativity, music curriculum writers do not give much attention to the teachers' role, focussing instead on suggestions for practice and organisational issues. There are also few references to the problems related with under-resourced music departments, as research reports and curriculum guidelines generally take the positive music 'school culture' for granted. The 'emotional environment' for composition and improvisation activities, including the 'time pressures' and the appropriate atmosphere for developing the pupils' creativity to the full, is not often discussed in the literature.

The teachers' descriptions of their pupils' creative process focussed mainly on the stages followed by pupils to complete the requirements of the lessons. These stages have been compared with relevant creativity theories. Participants perceived that composing, at secondary school level, was not necessarily an individual process.



They suggested positive group dynamics between pupils and did not find this type of activities stressful, which is apparently not in line with findings from other studies (i.e. Odam, 2000).

The music style and conventions within which participants felt they were teaching influenced the assessment of creative products. In accordance with White (1968), all the teachers had some sort of criteria to award good marks to pupils (e.g. when there is a 'sense of style' in the composition).

Finally it is suggested that the emphasis on planning in the current educational climate, set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, could be hindering the teachers' development of their pedagogical creativity.

In summary, there are some big differences between what these teachers say about creativity and creative activities in music education and the literature on the subject. Significant issues which are considered differently are the pupils' creative personalities and learning styles, emotional environment, positive group work dynamics, and creative teaching.

# CHAPTER 10

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHERS' BACKGROUNDS ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY

## **CHAPTER 10. THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHERS' BACKGROUNDS ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY**

### **10.1 - Introduction**

In this chapter the teachers' descriptions of their musical and professional backgrounds are analysed for the purpose of examining the third research question:

*In what ways do these teachers' musical and professional experiences influence their perceptions of creativity?*

The six teachers' backgrounds are individually presented (section 3). In order to investigate the relationship between backgrounds and views of creativity participants are compared with one another and with the perceptions of creativity explored in chapters 7 and 8.

### **10.2 – The teachers' backgrounds. Some general observations**

The quotations presented in this chapter come from the interviews with the six final participants and their Music Career Paths (the full career paths are included in Appendix VI). Following the reporting technique used by Cox (1999a) and Lennon (1996) the teachers' ideas have been incorporated in their own words as much as possible. As explained in Chapter 6, teachers were asked to complete a 'Musical Career Path' sheet, derived from methods developed by Denicolo and Pope (1990). Using an undulating path drawn on a single sheet, participants were asked to think back over their life experience and reflect on specific instances which they

considered had influenced the direction of their musical and educational outlook. The six teachers, who were already aware of the focus of the study, were invited to complete this exercise in private, visualising their lives as a winding path and writing down notes for each twist of the path (see Appendix VI). They were not given instructions about when in their lives to begin, and it is of interest to note that all of them started with experiences from an early age. Five teachers mentioned incidents from pre-school years. The open ended outcome of this technique also had the added advantage of letting the teachers choose the experiences they wanted to highlight, and the periods of their lives they wished to focus on. By using this technique instead of asking the same battery of questions to all participants, the thread was maintained for both of the intentions of this type of research, namely the researchers' posture of 'not knowing what is not known', suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 235), and the intention to offer illustrative examples rather than generalising theories (Eisner 1991). Qualitative enquiry, Eisner argued, is a matter of 'persuasion' because what counts at the end is determined by the personal judgement of the reader. As observed in Chapter 5, a qualitative study persuades by means of its coherence and the logic of its argument:

Particulars exemplify more than they describe directly. In the particular is located a general theme. (Eisner, 1991, p. 38)

There were several recurrent themes or similar types of experiences which were seen to be particularly generative of these teachers' views of what influenced their career paths. A closely related set of ideas was, for example, the wish to teach from an early age, observed by Patrick and Sarah (e.g. 'I always wanted to teach ever since I was about 6 years old!', Patrick, Appendix VI) and the fact that some of them were

teaching or helping other students while still at school (i.e. Helen, Elaine and Sarah). Another recurrent theme was that while all of them remembered musical experiences from an early age, the majority of these experiences had happened with members of their families, therefore suggesting a strong musical environment at home. This fact was illustrated with observations made, for example, by Emma singing with her family with parents accompanying on guitars from an early age, and Laura and her Irish cultural background where ‘music was regularly celebrated’ (Appendix VI). Even though there were patterns and related sets of ideas in all participants’ backgrounds (e.g. music experiences during childhood), the relationships between these recurrent themes with the teachers’ perceptions of creativity are not immediately obvious. However, analysis reveals that some of the teachers’ experiences appear to have influenced their views of creativity. These views are discussed with reference to the original framework in the fourth section of this chapter. The teachers’ experiences can be summarised as falling within three strands:

- The **musical strand**, which refers to the teachers’ past and present musical experiences, including their school and undergraduate education, and any musical activities undertaken in addition to teaching;
- The **teacher-training strand**, which refers to the participants’ comments regarding their teacher-training courses;
- And the **professional teaching strand** that includes their teaching experiences in their current and previous schools.

Nevertheless, these strands which constitute the teachers’ backgrounds can not be completely separated.

In the following section the backgrounds of the teachers participating in the study are individually outlined. This method of presenting the participants has been adopted from Burnard (2000). In her article *How children ascribe meaning to improvisation and composition* she presents her data by introducing each one of the individuals under consideration separately, and leaving the overall discussion for a later section. A similar procedure is adopted here.

### **10.3 - Analysing each subject's background**

#### Participant 1: Patrick

In his 'Musical Career Path' Patrick began by explaining experiences that influenced his life from a very early age (e.g. playing 'around on the piano at a neighbours' at the age of five, Appendix VI). He had classical viola and piano training and lots of practice playing in orchestras, smaller ensembles and accompanying on the piano while still at school:

I started the violin when I went to secondary school and after a year changed to the viola...I played in the orchestra and the wind band and performed in the regular concerts...At 15 I joined the [County] Youth Orchestra – went on a tour to New England, USA – some of my happiest musical memories. (Patrick. Appendix VI)

He studied O' level and A' level music and then he went onto study for a music degree at university, where he participated in 'lots of orchestral playing' and had 'opportunities to conduct' which he 'really enjoyed' (Appendix VI). Patrick regarded his degree as 'conventional' pointing out that all the music studied at university was 'Western classical stuff' ('the only composition that I ever did in my degree was...a pastiche...of Bach chorales, string quartets, fugues...nineteenth century...harmony

and counterpoint', Appendix V, question 23). He described his background as performance and musical analysis ('I would certainly not call myself a composer, and I don't do any composition myself at all', Appendix V, question 23). After graduating he went to an English university to do a PGCE and was 'introduced to many different styles of music'. He felt that the course 'was excellent' and he had two 'very contrasting but stimulating teaching practice schools' (Appendix VI). He observed that from a very early age, he had always wanted to teach ('I used to teach the recorder to younger pupils at my primary school', Appendix VI). He considered some of the music teachers he had studied under during his life to be highly influential in his own teaching (e.g. the conductor of his County Youth Orchestra, the tutor at university, and the two heads of department at the PGCE teaching practice schools). He started teaching in an inner-city boys school and 'learnt a lot, mainly about how not to run a Music Department'. After 18 months he went onto become a Head of Department at another school, and after several years he joined the school where he currently works as Head of Music. It is a comprehensive inner-city school for girls with a well-resourced Music Department and bands, choirs and orchestra.

#### Participant 2: Emma

Like four other teachers, Emma's first influential experiences date from her pre-school years ('my father was a wonderful baritone...[and] a vicar so we all sang in church', Appendix VI). Her childhood music experiences were with her family, singing together 'with parents accompanying on guitars from the age of six'. She learned the piano for three years and sang in church for five years, but stopped her formal music training at the age of thirteen, choosing art instead of music at school. She took a music O' level at night school in one year and got involved with rock

bands at College. She wrote songs there, joined a rock band and toured Europe at the age of twenty-one. After this she worked with several pop and rock bands as singer and composer, and has had experience working in studios, recording and engineering. She remembers the start of her career in the popular music business as follows:

My mum gave me £2000 and I bought a 4-track tape recorder and a microphone...I wrote on my own for a while getting a job in a recording studio where I was quickly promoted to sound engineer... During that time I joined a band (I had a four track that's how I got in)...I co-wrote songs with them, then met a guitarist who I have been writing with for 15 years...we worked full-time (masses of studios, gigs, video, etc). (Emma's Musical Career Path. Appendix VI)

She observed that after working abroad as a singer for some years, she returned to UK and undertook a postgraduate Jazz course at an English university, and then trained to be a music teacher. As observed in Chapter 7 (section 7), she felt that the jazz course took away her ability to compose ('the jazz course...hindered my creativity afterwards...because I'd been given...so many rules that it...almost destroyed it for me', Appendix V, question 40). She taught full-time for some years, 'burned out' and became part-time. She then started working as a Choral Animator running workshops with children, and became involved in a practitioners' network of world music a cappella. She is currently teaching part-time in a comprehensive inner-city school for girls and running vocal workshops 'all over the country' (Appendix VI).



### Participant 3: Laura

The first influential musical incidents of Laura's life, as she recalled in her Musical Career Path, were experienced with her family:

[My] father was very musical. As a pianist we all sang along from as early an age as I can remember. With an Irish cultural background, music was regularly celebrated. (Laura. Appendix VI)

She began her first arrangements of songs as a teenager ('church folk music...was very influential during my childhood and adolescence, and I first began arrangements of church hymns as a teenager', Appendix VI). She studied piano and observed that her piano teacher for ten years was 'an enormous influence'. She became acquainted with different styles of music in her youth – 'auditioning for a Performing Arts College at 16 years opened up doors to other styles and musicians' (Appendix VI). Then she studied for a Music and Drama degree, in which composition was 'a strong interest':

My degree was very much composition based. And that was my choice, rather than performance, recital, analysis. I'm much more into composition, and studio work...so that's my background, everything on that side. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 31)

After graduation she worked abroad teaching music and playing Irish folk music at a regular venue and returned to UK to study for a PGCE at an English university. And following this she started working at the school where she now runs the Music Department. It is a relatively small department in a large multicultural comprehensive inner-city school in what is classified as a deprived area.

#### Participant 4: Helen

Unlike the other five teachers, Helen's first music experiences, as reflected in her Music Career Path, date from her primary school, learning to play the recorder and the flute ('I thoroughly enjoyed this and continued into secondary. I wrote very short tunes for the flute at this time', Appendix VI). She observed that in her secondary school there was no music teacher, the recorder playing was poor and 'a maths teacher led the brass band'. She then learned to play the cornet and taught music to fellow students ('I began to learn the cornet and teach fellow students the recorder. I enjoyed doing this and continued through to the end of my fifth year', Appendix VI). She studied A' level music and then she went on to study for a degree in Music and Drama and specialised in flute, taking a variety of modules 'in order to keep...future choices open'. After her degree, she was a little uncertain of going into teaching, but a lot of people encouraged her and eventually she applied to do a PGCE. During the teacher-training course she became acquainted with different music styles:

I applied to do a PGCE and enjoyed a year of learning to teach and learning about world music. The course changed my outlook on the musical world. (Helen. Appendix VI)

As observed in Chapter 7, section 7, she amplified her explanations regarding the PGCE in the final interview. Although having studied harmony during her BA, she observed that in her PGCE she was not taught 'how to go about composing' ('we played around with [twentieth century] improvisation, but only...to try and get the sort of classically set of people into improvising ideas', Appendix V, question 27). She started teaching 'with lots of doubts' as to her suitability to it, but has 'enjoyed all aspects of the job...except the long hours' (Appendix VI). She teaches at a

comprehensive school in a rural area, which has a well-resourced separate building for the Music Department.

#### Participant 5: Elaine

Elaine's first influential music experiences date from pre-school age and were with members of her family ('listening to my father, sister and brother make music and wanting to join in', Appendix VI). Like Emma and Laura some of these experiences relate to church music ('being in the choir and loving to sing the bass line rather than soprano', Appendix VI). Her first teaching experiences date as well from a very early age, 'organising a concert for a local hospice' when she was eleven years old. She then realised that 'other children in the road couldn't sing or play' what she wanted them to. Whilst being a student she felt that composing allowed the essence of who she was 'to be exposed to the world'. She remembered being 'able to be successful in music without really trying'. She went to a music school where 'loving music was the norm' and then later realised that 'other people had a very different reality' (Appendix VI).

As observed in Chapter 7 (section 7), during her final interview she said that the composition course studied as part of her degree was 'very traditional' ('we didn't do original composition', Appendix V, question 27). However she felt 'pretty much' confident teaching composition activities in the classroom (Appendix V, question 50). She is currently the Head of Music at a comprehensive school in a rural area. The school has a well-resourced Music Department in a separate building and a number of bands and choirs.

#### Participant 6: Sarah

Sarah explained, like four other teachers, that her first influential music experiences dated from pre-school age. She described her childhood music environment at home as being with ‘an abundance of classical music played (recordings), along with folk music and Abba!’(Appendix VI). Sarah observed she was very active as a student, taking up recorder at the age of five, clarinet at nine and cello at eleven. In secondary school she started learning keyboard and joined three orchestras – two youth and one adult. As a teenager, she remembered being enrolled for a special music course as ‘a turning point’. She described it as follows:

A major turning point was when I went to college at 16 on a Pre-Professional Music Course and studied Music for 28 hrs a week! I received piano lessons for the first time and played in many concerts (almost 1-2 a week). This experience cemented my commitment to music...I decided on teaching as a career. (Sarah. Appendix VI)

She then studied for a BMus degree at an English university and continued to participate in ‘as many concerts-ensembles and activities as possible’. During that time she was a student tutor at a six-form college, teaching A’ level music, and at a school, teaching KS3 and KS4. She observed that after her undergraduate degree, and having taught for some years, she knew she wanted to study for a PGCE (‘I wanted to combine my love of music with my commitment to working with young people’, Appendix VI). She pointed out that the PGCE was ‘academically stimulating...but musically, standards were lower’, and she found this aspect ‘uninspiring’. During her first teaching post she joined a local choir and started teaching herself the violin so that she was, as she put it, ‘starting a new musical adventure: being a learner’ (Appendix VI). She studied for an MA in Music Education, focussing the personal research she had been doing for three years,

finishing it shortly before participating in the present study. She is currently the Head of a middle-size Music Department at a comprehensive school on the South coast of England. She plays in one orchestra on a weekly basis and undertakes occasional 'gig' work with a variety of choirs, orchestras and local jazz ensembles.

#### **10.4 - Discussion. The relationship between the teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions of creativity**

##### *Teachers' perceptions of creative pupils*

What emerges from this enquiry is that the professional teaching strand and the music strand influenced these teachers' perception of creative pupils. In contrast, the participants' experiences regarding their teacher training courses did not emerge as an important factor affecting their perceptions of this issue. For example, Emma's music strand, which includes her own school education, had a bearing on her views of creative pupils. This teacher observed that because of her experience of studying music at school she could recognise different types of creative pupils. In particular she acknowledged different ways in which pupils may develop their creativity:

There are so many ways of being creative...there are the kids who are very extrovert, who tend to get into trouble in lots of places within the curriculum. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 35)

She observed that a lot of these pupils 'are very creative and what happens in a very formal music background is that...[their] creativity doesn't really get a place to flourish...' (Appendix V, question 35). She commented:

I gave up music at school at the age of 13...I took music O' level at night school...very formal, no music making. (Appendix VI, her emphasis)

This teacher described herself as being extrovert and a bit problematic when she was an adolescent, and felt she could recognise this type of pupils because of her own schooling. She observed she knew how to handle the different pupils' styles encountered in mixed ability groups because when she was younger she 'was a bit' like the pupils described above. Because of her experience of giving up music in secondary school, even though she considered herself creative at that time, these were the students she specially cared for:

Those are certainly the kids that I have my eye on because I know I was a bit like that myself...but then I am not having anything against the kids who are very creative and introvert as well, which you do have both...and they both have to be nurtured. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 35)

Another link that can be suggested from this study is that the professional teaching experiences reflected on by two teachers (i.e. Patrick and Laura) had a bearing on some of their observations regarding the relationship between children's musical creativity and home background. These teachers presented different viewpoints concerning the influence of the pupils' home background on the pupils' creativity (Chapter 7, section 3). Patrick concluded that from his teaching experiences he observed that a musical family background was not necessarily a condition for creative students:

I can think of students who are very...musically able...who don't have musical backgrounds and others who do. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 22)

In contrast, Laura observed that:

[The pupils' home] background does have a very large effect on what they bring, and what they come out with. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 23)

Interestingly, the schools and the day-to-day teaching experiences of Laura and Patrick are different too. These teachers' comments regarding their school music culture were analysed in Chapter 8 (section 3) and underlined the differences between the two schools. Laura is teaching pupils with a wide range of family incomes and backgrounds from different cultures. Patrick is teaching pupils with more similar backgrounds in a relatively affluent city area, in a school where the status of music is far removed from Laura's. Whilst Patrick manages a well-resourced Music Department ('the instruments we have cost quite a lot of money', Appendix V, question 5), Laura is the Head of a small Music Department with a shortage of staff and resources, in a multicultural school from a deprived city area:

It's a battle...to find space in this school... We...got a bid from an outside agency to promote the music from certain cultural groups...We have no money FROM the school. (Laura. Appendix V. Questions 34 and 39)

It is apparent from this study that the current teaching experiences of participants had an effect on their perceptions of creative pupils. It is not difficult to understand, that Patrick does not have the same perceptions as Laura regarding the home background influence on the pupils' creativity. In addition, he has not experienced a school like the one of Laura in his own education (e.g. 'at 15 I...went on a tour [playing with the County Youth Orchestra] to...USA...Studied A-level music at a specialist music course...Studied for a music degree at [Oxbridge]', Patrick, Appendix VI).

### *Teachers' views on the appropriate environment for creativity*

The most significant strand affecting these teachers' perceptions of the environment for creativity was their own music-making experience. It would appear that having experiences with improvisation and composition, as well as experiences with different musical styles, helped the teachers to describe the conditions to facilitate the appropriate environment for creativity. For example Laura, Emma and Sarah have experience in composing and improvising. Emma is a songwriter and studied a postgraduate jazz course; Laura majored in composition at university, and Sarah plays with jazz ensembles. It is of interest to note that these were the teachers who put forward comments more keenly, regarding the environment for developing the pupil's creativity. In particular they described some factors that facilitated and some factors that inhibited this environment. One of the factors that might hinder the environment for creativity, as explained by participants, was 'time pressures'. This emerged when anxiety was brought onto teacher and pupils due to exams, preparation for concerts and lack of time due to the compartmentalisation of the school time within slots, distorting or even breaking the appropriate environment. Hence the overall quality of the pupils' work suffered with it. Emma and Laura, explaining the lessons videotaped, put it as follows:

We had such a short amount of time...there was that added pressure of having to learn the songs for the concert AND do the song writing...Next year we will definitely do it a different way round, because you don't get enough time...[to develop the compositions]. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 6)

I thought that they had a short amount of time to prepare [their compositions] before I came round to hear what their progress was so far... You could tell that the time was so short... (Laura. Appendix V. Question 16)



It appears from this enquiry that these teachers, having had experience in composing themselves, were able to acknowledge the facilitating conditions for the environment for creativity. Moreover they were able to acknowledge the lack of these conditions, and then act upon them ('next year we will definitely do it a different way round', Emma, question 6). Although this study is not concerned with generalisations, participants with less experience with composing and improvising did not comment on the conditions to facilitate the environment for creativity to the extent of Emma, Laura and Sarah. For example Patrick, who did not compose 'at all' and described his background as performance and musical analysis, focussed his comments regarding the environment for creativity on having a good physical setting ('I give [the pupils] instruments and space...and then the creativity will grow', Appendix V, question 20). This perception is illustrated in the following quotation:

If [the pupils] are sat in the right place, they've got the instruments, and they've got all the space and everything else cleared out the way, then the stage is set for what we have to do...If physically things are not right...then it would just cause disruption later on... A lot of music work can end up just [being] a lot of noise and mayhem.  
(Patrick. Appendix V. Question 2)

Another important aspect that facilitates the environment for creativity, as explained by participants, is the pupils' motivation. Here again the teachers with composing experience in different music styles, were the ones describing extensively how to motivate pupils (Chapter 8, section 3). In particular, these teachers observed that working with a music style that is close to the pupils' tastes is very useful in keeping them motivated during composition projects. One such example was the case of Emma, whose music-making background includes abundant experience with a variety of styles. During a unit on pop song composition, she worked with songs

from the charts, and observed that this helped ‘to switch them on’ and to ‘get them excited about the project’:

I thought by using music that was very current...that that would excite them, that would focus them, that would make them think about choruses in a way, rather than just hearing them....Because it is something they know...and if they know it, they like it, and...they are actually participating on another level if they like it already.  
(Emma. Appendix V. Questions 11 and 12)

This teacher found this process natural and during this pop song composition unit she used to sit with groups of pupils in separate practice rooms to discuss their progress, in what she described as a ‘facilitator’ or ‘nurturer’ role:

I’m an ‘inspirer’, hopefully...being involved in a...quite immediate type of collaborative art form. (Appendix V. Questions 38 and 65)

There were differences of opinion amongst these teachers, regarding the importance of the environment. A link between the participants’ professional teaching experiences and their perception of the environment for creativity cannot be determined from the present enquiry. For example, it cannot be suggested that the different availability of school space and resources necessarily always affected these teachers’ perception of the environment for creativity. Laura and Sarah did not have several practice rooms in their Music Departments, and this fact did not influence their views regarding the need of separate spaces for pupils to work in. It is suggested from this study that the teachers’ music-making experiences is the main strand affecting their views of this issue. However, Patrick regarded the physical environment as crucial and that perception originated from his teaching practice because, as he observed, he did not do any improvising or composing himself outside

the classroom setting. It is apparent that in this case, the musical strand and the professional teaching strand overlap.

The teacher training, although acknowledged as helpful by two teachers, did not emerge as a major impact on their current perceptions of the environmental factors to facilitate the pupils' creativity, apart from introducing them to unfamiliar music styles. Illustrative examples of this were the lessons videotaped with Patrick. He had a classical performance education and he was using popular music styles in his lessons that were introduced to him during his PGCE:

After graduating I went to [an English university] to do a PGCE....The course was excellent...[I was] introduced to many different styles of music, and I had two very contrasting but stimulating teaching practice schools. (Patrick, Appendix VI)

He complained nevertheless that the student teachers in his course were not 'taught very well how to compose' themselves (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 23). Helen, commenting on her PGCE, observed that she 'enjoyed a year of learning to teach and learning about world music' (Appendix VI). She said the course changed her 'outlook on the musical world', but regretted that she was not taught 'how to go about composing' during her teacher training (Appendix V, question 60). Sarah commented that the musical standards of her PGCE were lower than she expected, and the other three teachers did not put forward any comments regarding composition and improvisation lessons learned during their teacher training courses.

### *The teachers' perceptions of the creative process*

In Chapter 7 it was observed that some participants (e.g. Elaine) did not identify stages in their pupils' creative process. The teachers' comments were focussed mainly on practice and with the steps followed in the teaching of composition and improvisation. It was also observed that the process of creativity was considered differently during music composition or improvisation, depending on the music activity (Chapter 7, section 5). Even though there were related sets of ideas in the participants' explanations regarding the process of creativity, the relationship between these ideas with the teachers' career paths are, again, not obvious. The experiences pertaining to the training and professional teaching strands did not seem to have a significant effect on their perceptions of this issue, with the exception of Patrick. He described three stages in the improvisation process, focussing his comments on the teaching process, rather than the pupils' creative process. It is apparent that this teacher described the steps followed in the teaching of improvisation drawing on his professional teaching experiences. A similar situation was outlined in the last section, with reference to the environment for creativity.

It may be suggested that the teachers' music-making experiences influenced some of their views regarding the creative process. As observed previously in this chapter Laura and Emma had experience with composition. This seemed to have a bearing in their perceptions of the process, which could be described as more openly defined than Patrick's perception. While Patrick observed he followed a structured approach to teach improvisation (see Chapter 7, section 5), Emma and Laura described the creative process more openly and were sceptical of outlining a universal and rigid staging in the creative process:

Every group goes into different stages...One of the...challenges of the scheme, is that...some groups get it straight away and some groups it takes a few weeks of struggling and then it comes through...There are so many different ways that you can song-write, you can do the chords first, you can do the tune first, you can do the rhythm first, you can do the words first...I...keep it quite open...when I went into groups I would...try and see which was the best way to get into that particular group. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 10 and 20)

A suggestion that teachers with composing experience, like Emma and Laura, would be more 'competent' than teachers without composing experience was put forward by Alston (1980: 129). She observed that 'composition facilitates the acquisition of musical concepts at both identification and production level' (i.e. listening and performing). One of her recommendations was that music educators should have more experience with composing. Moreover, it has been suggested by Green (1990) that youngsters engage with a variety of compositional processes depending on the musical style of the piece they are working. It would seem that Emma and Laura's comments regarding the creative process are informed by the fact that, on the one hand, they have experience with improvisation and composition and on the other hand, they have music-making experience with different styles.

The experiences pertaining to the teacher-training strand observed by these teachers did not appear to have a bearing on their perceptions of issues related to the creative process. It has been pointed out in Chapter 7, section 7, that Helen and Patrick complained about the lack of training in either composing or the teaching of composing skills during their teacher training courses. This might explain the little influence of this strand on these two teachers' perceptions. There is no indication that

during the course of their training these teachers attended lectures on ‘creativity’. Their experiences seem to have been focussed around workshop activities:

On [the]...PGCE we played around with improvisation, but...it was only twentieth century improvisation, to try and get the sort of classically [trained] set of people into improvising. But we didn’t discuss...big ideas [on composition]. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 27)

### *Teachers’ perceptions of creative products*

It becomes apparent that the teachers with a variety of experiences with different music styles were more prepared to accept as ‘creative products’ the compositions of pupils who did not necessarily keep to the style or the structure of the activity given by the teacher. Emma, who has experiences with pop-rock bands as well as traditional choir singing, and Sarah, who also has experiences with different music styles, illustrated in different anecdotes that they were prepared to accept pupils’ different solutions to a structured music activity. They would do so even if the pupils’ solutions were beyond the given structure, as long as the solutions were coherent and followed a pupil’s musical idea. Indeed, these two teachers were amongst the ones who observed more keenly that one of their aims during their lessons on composition was to get the pupils to work with ‘their own’ music (see Chapter 7, section 6):

The scheme is...that they take part and create in groups their own song, their own ORIGINAL song. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 10)

I was trying to move them...into experimenting with notes and rhythms...to make something which was identifiably theirs rather than identifiably what I’d given them. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 15)

Sarah was observed and videotaped during a Year 8 Blues project, where pupils were challenged to compose a melody for a given blues chord sequence. In the final interview we watched an extract from one of the lessons where a boy played his composition in front of his classmates, changing the original chord sequence. Sarah commented:

He came up with a chord sequence that he liked, it was kind of akin to what I'd given them in terms of blue series, but he was confident to stick to what he'd done, and to him it sounded right and therefore he played that. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 52)

This comment is closely related with her perception of creativity:

I suppose my definition of creativity would include... 'personal originality'. Because something for a particular individual may be highly creative, in that it is unique and a new experience for them, but within a wider social context might not be innovative... It's to do with risk-taking... [if] you find it hard to push yourself or to experiment, then you'll never discover that. (Sarah. Appendix V. Questions 26 and 27)

As the quotations above illustrate, Sarah's perception of creativity has a bearing on her views of music teaching. It is apparent that these teachers' musical knowledge has also a bearing on what they consider as 'good' or 'not good' in the pupils' products. Elaine, for instance, referred to value issues such as 'quality' and 'style' in the pupils' work, in order to award them a good mark:

The quality and the style of how they improvise, would distinguish whether [students] are going to get an 'A' or a 'B'. (Elaine. Appendix V. Question 35)

Patrick referred to the 'character' and 'musical awareness' that he could identify in 'good' work:

What I'm looking for is...some sort of character to it...a sense of style....for example, the girl who was very good, [her work] had many of those things. But it would be wrong to say it was good just because it had some syncopated rhythms, and so on. It may be [that] somebody that had very syncopated rhythms, doesn't have that other...you know, this higher awareness in terms of musical structure and shape. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 32)

How the personal experiences of these teachers influenced their assessment of the pupils' products is an issue which is not precisely quantifiable. Even if all their personal experiences were disclosed in much more detail – which might contravene the ethical protocols explained in Chapter V – it would be difficult to suggest a relationship between particular experiences and value issues. However, their musical knowledge, gained from their experiences, had a bearing in the assessment of the pupils' products. In other words, participants drew on their own understanding of 'quality' and 'character' within a given style, when considering the value of musical products. It is apparent that teachers need to be familiar with different music styles because they need to be able to assess the pupils' compositions in a wide range of styles.

It is difficult to identify a relationship between the participants' teacher training experiences and their perceptions of creative products. It emerges from Sarah's and Patrick's comments on their PGCE courses that the participants' experiences during their training did not appear to affect their views on this issue. It can not be suggested



from an analysis of the transcripts that the teacher training had any influence on the way that participants came to evaluate creative products.

It has to be noted that the views of these teachers can not be generalised. This is not the aim of this type of enquiry. Participants' perceptions are illustrative examples of the unique reality of each teacher; in other words, each example is bounded by its own context.

The remaining strand, the professional teaching experiences in their present and previous schools, did not appear either to directly affect the teachers' perceptions of their pupils' creative products. However participants perceived an improvement in their own creative products due to, as they observed, their professional teaching experiences working with youngsters. For example teachers pointed out benefits in their own compositions:

Now, if I was asked to compose, I would actually do a much better job through the teaching that I've done. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 23)

Teaching...helped me to...write songs myself. (...) I get a lot from [my pupils]...In a way, I don't feel like I'm a teacher. I just feel like I am a SENIOR learner (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 40 and 42)

It has been suggested, nevertheless, that the major influence upon these teachers' perceptions of creative products, in particular their pupils' musical compositions and improvisations, comes from their musical strand, which includes past and present music-making experiences undertaken in addition to teaching.

## 10.5 – Summary and conclusion

The relationship between these teachers' backgrounds and their views of creativity are not immediately obvious. In order to examine the possible links, each framework theme has been looked at with reference to three strands (musical strand, teacher-training strand, and professional teaching strand). Regarding the theme of creative pupils, it is suggested that both the professional teaching and musical strands appear to have a significant effect on these teachers' views. The teachers' music strand experiences influenced some of their views regarding different types of creative pupils (e.g. Emma). Another link that is suggested, is that the teaching experiences reflected by two participants had a bearing on their observations regarding the relationship between music creativity and home background of pupils. Laura observed from her teaching experiences that the pupil's home background had a 'large effect' on what the pupils 'come out with'. In contrast, Patrick concluded that a musical family background is not a condition for musically able students. It is suggested that these teachers have different perceptions regarding this issue because they have experienced contrasting schools. The participants' experiences from their teacher training courses did not emerge as an important factor affecting their perceptions of creative pupils.

Regarding the environment for creativity, it is the musical strand that emerges as the most influential on the teachers' views. It is observed that having experiences with a variety of music styles and activities, including composition, helped three teachers to describe the conditions to facilitate the appropriate environment for creativity. These teachers were amongst the ones who more keenly put forward comments regarding

the factors that might hinder the environment for creativity and the factors that facilitate such environment, including the pupils' motivation. The teacher-training and professional teaching strands did not appear to affect their perception of these issues.

The relationship between the teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions of the process of creativity is not obvious. It is suggested, however, that two of the teachers with composing experience (i.e. Laura and Emma) presented views of the process which could be described as more 'open' than other teachers. For instance Patrick stated that he followed a structured approach to teach improvisation, while Emma and Laura were sceptical of outlining a universal and rigid staging in the creative process (see Chapter 7, section 5). These examples were in keeping with the suggestion by Green (1990, 2000) that youngsters engage with a variety of processes depending on their experience and the music style of the piece.

Regarding the influence of the teachers' backgrounds on their perception of creative products, it is observed that participants with a variety of experiences with different music styles (e.g. Emma and Sarah), were more prepared to accept as 'creative products' the work by pupils who did not necessarily keep to the style or the structure of the activity originally given by the teacher. Indeed these two teachers were amongst the ones who commented more keenly that one of their aims during their composition projects was to get the pupils to work with 'their own' music (Chapter 7, section 6). It is suggested that the professional teaching and the teacher-training strands did not affect their perception of these issues. Although participants commented on their teacher training courses and pointed out both good experiences

and minor complaints, these courses did not appear to have a significant effect on their perceptions of creative products.

The purpose of this study is not to seek for generalisations, but to try to accomplish a deeper understanding of the issues under enquiry. The methodology, as pointed out in previous chapters, helped to illustrate particular cases with 'thick descriptions' (Lamont, 2002: 230) rather than generalised statements. It is suggested that these teachers' perceptions of creativity were modelled by their experiences over their entire life and indeed the wider society to which they belong. This study is an insight into the views of these teachers over a limited period of time. All the interviews and the classroom observations - from which the videotaped extracts for the interviews were selected - were carried out during a single academic year. As observed by Denicolo and Pope (1990: 164) the teachers' mind is like 'a rope made up of many threads' which if cut across may 'give a false impression of its construction. One needs to follow the threads over time to gain insight into the structure of the rope'. It would be interesting to undertake a follow up with the same participants in ten or fifteen years time, replicating the study to see if their views have changed. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 12.

## SUMMARY OF PART THREE

The issues emerging from the data analysis were coded under twenty-eight categories and subcategories, which are presented in chapters 7 and 8 with the aim of exploring the first research question. The categories examined in Chapter 7 are concerned with general issues on creativity which follow the four themes (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product). This is not to say that all participants presented identical views. It would appear that even though they considered that creativity could be developed in all pupils, they did not agree on how this creativity was to be described. The variety of observations put forward by these teachers exemplifies the complexity of this topic.

Some unexpected findings emerged, which are discussed in Chapter 7 and coded under the categories regarding the pupils 'Personal characteristics', the 'Unstructured process', the 'Time requirements' (subcategory of the 'Emotional environment'), and the 'Teachers' own creativity'. These findings indicate three clear differentiations between:

- the traditional and new concepts of creativity,
- the pupils' individual creativity and their creativity relative to peers,
- the teachers' pedagogical and musical creativities.

A second unexpected finding is these teachers' perceptions of pupils' diverse creative personalities. A third finding, relating to participants' perceptions of time requirements for the appropriate 'emotional environment' for creativity, was

something that was not mentioned in the literature. Finally, the small number of comments put forward regarding the pupils' creative process was surprising.

In Chapter 8 the remaining categories and subcategories related to the four-fold framework are examined. The focus is on practical issues regarding the teaching of music. These teachers observed that during music composition and improvisation activities pupils follow different learning styles, examined under the categories 'adaptor' and 'innovator' pupil. Participants who identified them perceived both types of pupils as creative. The issue for educators is how to cope with the different learning styles in the classroom, which is illustrated in the subcategories 'Teachers' role' and 'Teaching methods', from the 'Emotional environment' category (Chapter 8, section 3). Another relevant point made by participants is their perception that they could help to create the environment to develop pupils' creativity with the use of space and resources, depending on the activity, the style of learning and the musical ability of the students ('Emotional' and 'Physical environment' categories, and their respective subcategories 'School culture' and 'Classroom settings'). These teachers perceived that composing at Key Stage 3 is not necessarily an individual process, and suggested positive group dynamics between pupils. Finally, received stylistic music conventions are discussed, with reference to how these factors influence teaching, learning and assessment.

The purpose of Chapter 9 is to consider the second research question, concerned with the similarities and differences between the literature and the participants' views. It is observed that many of the issues examined in chapters 7 and 8 are scarcely found in music education literature. For instance, it is necessary to go to the general education

literature to find references to the pupils' different learning styles. Moreover the characterisations of the creative personality found in the studies reviewed do not always match the perceptions and descriptions of these teachers. With reference to the creative environment it is observed that current music curriculum writers pay little attention to the teacher's role, focussing on organisational issues and suggestions for practice. Participants perceived positive group dynamics between pupils composing and did not find this type of activity stressful, in contrast with findings from other studies. In accordance with the literature they all had some sort of criteria to assess creativity in the work of their pupils. However, these teachers and their pupils seem to value negotiated criteria.

Chapter 10 is focussed on the third research question, which considers the influence of the participants' background on their perceptions of creativity. The teachers' backgrounds are analysed and it is suggested that their experiences fall into three strands, namely the musical strand, the teacher-training strand, and the professional teaching strand. Even though the relationship between teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions of creativity are not obvious, it is suggested that the musical strand – which includes past and present musical experiences, undergraduate education and musical activities undertaken in addition to teaching – is the most influential. This is followed by the professional teaching strand. It is observed that having experience of a variety of music styles and activities, including composition, helped some participants to describe the conditions which would facilitate the appropriate environment for creativity. Two of these teachers presented views of the process that could be described as more 'open' than other teachers, and were sceptical of outlining a rigid staging in the creative process. Moreover, participants with a variety

of experiences of different music styles were more prepared to accept as 'creative products' the work by pupils who did not necessarily keep to the style or the structure of the activity originally set by the teacher.



***PART FOUR:***  
***SOME IMPLICATIONS AND***  
***CONCLUSIONS***

# CHAPTER 11

## SOME IMPLICATIONS

## **CHAPTER 11. SOME IMPLICATIONS**

### **11.1 - Introduction**

Following the methodology of the study described in Part Two, an analysis of the participants' perceptions has been developed in Part Three. The original four-fold framework (Pupil-Environment-Process-Product) was extended to include twenty-eight categories and subcategories. From the point of view of the creative pupil theme, participants described the different learning styles of pupils and considered the relationship between the pupils' home background and their creativity. Regarding the environment for creativity, participants referred to the emotional and physical settings considered as more appropriate for pupils' development. Within this theme, several categories were discussed concerning pupils' motivation, the school culture, the teachers' role, the teaching methods, time requirements, classroom settings, complaints and proposals for improvement. In terms of the creative process, the following categories were considered: different activities, group process, improvisation-composition, structured and unstructured process. Finally, from the point of view of the creative product, participants commented on the assessment of the pupils' work, its originality, and the musical style and conventions which determined the evaluation of musical compositions and improvisations.

The focus in this chapter is on some of the implications, which arise from a 'dialogue' between Part One (what was known) and Part Three (what this study shows). Several issues relevant to educational practice have been examined in Chapter 9 (sections 2 to 7) and the discussion of Chapter 10 (section 4). In the

following sections three main issues are considered further. They are concerned with: the relationship between research, theory and practice; curriculum documentation and practice; teacher education and training. The aim of the discussion is reflective rather than prescriptive.

### **11.2 - Research, theory and practice**

The relationship between educational research and the practice of teaching is a contentious one. The difficulty of connecting the knowledge generated by researchers and the practice of classroom teachers has been recently analysed by Coulter and Wiens (2002) who observe that 'classroom teachers dismiss the academics' research knowledge as a poor substitute for actual experience'. At the same time, educational researchers write about the importance of their work for understanding and improving classroom practice. Coulter and Wiens (2002) argue for a move from debates between academics and classroom teachers about knowledge and practice, to focusing on how all 'might become better educational judges' (p. 15). Over twenty-five years ago Stenhouse (1975) pointed to issues regarding the relationship between research, the teacher and curriculum development, which are still relevant to contemporary practice. He proposed that teachers should have a central role in the development of their curriculum, considering each teacher as a researcher and each classroom as a laboratory (p. 142). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) call this 'action research' or 'practitioner research'. It has been argued that research findings elicited using such methodology would have more relevance for the teacher-researcher and his or her particular classroom. But however close the teacher is drawn to the research process, it would

appear that there is normally a space between theory and practice. Eisner (1979) points out the need for readers of research reports to adapt any recommendations to their particular practices. He argues that findings of educational research cannot be applied to educational situations in a straightforward manner. They need to be 'placed in the perspective of the context in which they are to be used' (Eisner, 1979: ix). The point has been made in Chapter 5 when discussing methodological issues, that readers of 'naturalistic' studies make their own connections in the light of their experience, depending on the degree of contextual similarity. As indicated in page 95, Eisner (1991, 2001) observes that qualitative research is concerned with the formation of meaning, rather than with the discovery of truth. It is this attitude towards generating knowledge in this type of enquiry that has informed the present research process throughout.

The gap between theory and practice is indeed central to the study. The similarities and differences between the education literature and the participants' perceptions are a focal point of the first and second research questions: (a) the characterisation of creativity in the participants' discourse, and (b) the similarities and differences between the literature on creativity and the teachers' perceptions (Chapter 1, section 5). When the research literature did not include issues that were perceived as important by participants in this study, there appeared to be a space between theory and practice. For example, it has been suggested that participants perceived different ways of learning in different creative pupils (Chapter 9, section 3). At least two different learning styles were perceived. Drawing a parallel with Entwistle (1991) these were described as 'serialist' and 'holist' styles. Learning styles are rarely, if ever, considered in the music curriculum literature which appears to focus on music

activities and classroom organisation. Neither is there reference to learning styles in the general literature on creativity. A further issue to consider is the personality of creative pupils. The teachers in this investigation perceived creative pupils as possibly having different personalities:

I would say that there are two types of creative personality...the extrovert...[and] the introvert and they both have to be nurtured. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 35)

In contrast, previous psychological studies reviewed in Chapter 2, describe the creative individual with lists of traits. For example MacKinnon in the 1960s and later Cropley (1992), characterised the creative individual with traits such as impulsive and non-conformist. The creative thinker, suggests Cropley, tends to avoid adherence to restrictive schedules and may show a certain disregard for observing details of plans and rules. This characterisation is in line with only one of the types of creative pupils described by participants. In a study of the personality of musicians, Kemp (1996) drawing on previous research by MacKinnon, Barron and Roe, again considers the creative individual with a list of traits:

Roe (1961)...described them as 'independent and self-sufficient...they have high dominance [and] autonomy...they are not subject to group standards and control; they are highly ego-centric'...My own review of a large body of literature...generally showed them to be...independent, sensitive, imaginative, radical, and expedient. (Kemp, 1996: 195-196)

It has been suggested in Chapter 9 (section 3) that a combination of these traits can lead to apparently disorganised behaviour. This is one of the reasons why some creative children may be difficult to handle in the classroom. The music curriculum literature does not take into account the pupils' diverse behaviour, and it appears

from this study that teachers perceive several types of creative personality in children. The teachers in this study explained they tried to work individually with students taking into account the pupils' characteristics. They observed the need to adapt teaching to the pupils' 'individual differences', including their different levels of musical development (previous learning), personalities and learning styles. The term 'individual differences' is interpreted in the literature in different ways. Swanwick (1999: 54-55) refers to the different 'social and personal worlds' of the pupils but he does not specifically refer to any learning styles. Witchel (2001: 201) acknowledges the pupils' 'individual needs' and advocates 'planning for differentiation', offering some guidelines to improve the organisation of composing as a classroom activity. However, he does not engage in discussing the different learning strategies of pupils, assuming that the problem is 'essentially an organisational one, especially in secondary schools'. Witchel (2001), like Paynter (1982, 1992) and Odam (2000), considers individual learning in terms of the pupils' different musical development. In doing this and focussing their conclusions on organisational issues and suggestions for practice, the teacher's role as professional in charge of making educational judgements in the classroom becomes undervalued. As observed in Chapter 9 (section 3), to find references on different ways of learning it is necessary to draw on the general education literature and psychology studies such as the work of Entwistle (1981, 1991).

Regarding the environment for creativity participants observed that receiving support from the school management when needed and having good relations with the other teachers were important factors in keeping alive a positive music school culture. These comments were coded under the category 'School culture'. Teachers explained

that the classroom music experiences at Key Stage 3 were crucial for the subsequent choice of subjects at a latter stage, and they offered a range of classroom and extra-curricular activities that were regarded as accessible to all students. One case was reported by one teacher (Laura) where the relations between the Music Department and the school senior management were not positive. This teacher described as a 'battle' the process of finding the resources to buy instruments and provide appropriate classroom and extra-curricular activities. Indeed, a conclusion that can be drawn from participants' statements is the enthusiasm that they have for their work. This became apparent in all the schools and was particularly noted in the case of Laura who was teaching in extremely difficult circumstances (e.g. Laura, Chapter 8, section 3). In spite of this she retained an optimistic and positive attitude. It is apparent from a review of the literature that music education research reports often focus on 'successful schools' (e.g. Harland *et al*, 2000). Research reports and proposals for practice - as set in documents containing schemes for work and activities such as the National Curriculum - generally take for granted the 'positive music school culture' that these teachers considered crucial in providing an appropriate environment for creativity.

Another issue that is considered differently by writers on education and these teachers is the process of creativity. Participants did not put forward many comments regarding the creative process of their pupils. When they did so, fixed stages were rarely observed. For example Laura explained that she did not want students to follow any given structure when composing the music for a film scene, and Emma observed that there were 'many ways' to compose and 'open the doors' (see Chapter 7, section 5). In contrast the psychologists Stein (1962) and Mackinnon (1963),



whose work is reviewed in Chapter 2 (section 5), observe a series of fixed stages in the creative process. Some music educators also outline a series of stages in the creative process for music composition. Berkley (2001) observes a three-steps circular process including 'Generating' (playing with ideas, exploring, improvising), 'Realising' (practicing, establishing a fixed version, transcribing) and 'Editing' (modifying, evaluating). Durrant and Welch (1995:30) describe a 'composition helix' that includes the following: planning, drafting, performing and recording, appraising, editing, redrafting, appraising and final recording. The issue at stake is that if the significance is in the process, as suggested by Mackinnon (1963) and Berkley (2001), then creativity has to be identified without reference to a product. Therefore the product is of central importance because the process can not be assessed in classrooms as 'creative' or 'not creative' without reference to the pupils' product. This issue illustrates one of the gaps between the literature and these teachers' perceptions. The creative process is indeed much discussed in the literature (Bennett, 1975; Byrne and Sheridan, 2001; De Souza Fleith, 2000) but it seems that, in fact, these teachers made far more observations on the pupils' products than they did on their pupils' creative process. Generally, participants seemed to know what was good or bad in the pupil's work. They 'knew' which composition or improvisation was original, which pupils deserved some praise, and which pupils needed some help to further develop their work. These teachers displayed a degree of 'connoisseurship' regarding musical products. Eisner adopted this term in developing a qualitative methodology for the study of educational phenomena. He used the concepts of 'educational connoisseurship' and 'educational criticism' (Eisner, 1976, 1977, 1985a, 1985b, 1991). For the latter he drew on the work of Dewey, in particular the discussion of criticism put forward in *Art as Experience* (Dewey, 1934). The word

connoisseurship has some unfortunate connotations, such as elite consumerism or snobbery. In Eisner's (1985a: 118) educational use of the word, connoisseurship 'relates to any form of expertise in any area' of human endeavour. He suggests that educational practice could be improved by enabling those 'engaged in education to improve their ability to see and think about what they do':

Educational practice as it occurs in schools is an inordinately complicated affair filled with contingencies that are extremely difficult to predict, let alone control. Connoisseurship in education, as in other areas, is that art of perception that makes the appreciation of such complexity possible. (Eisner, 1985a: 104)

He observes that 'if connoisseurship is the art of appreciation, criticism is the art of disclosure'. To this endeavour the critic 'aims at providing a rendering in linguistic terms of what it is that he or she has encountered so that others not possessing his level of connoisseurship can also enter into the work' (Eisner, 1985a: 105). The final aim of educational criticism is to provide 'the bridge needed by others to experience the qualities and relationships within some arena of activity' (p. 105). Eisner observes that by criticism he does not mean 'the negative appraisal of something but rather the illumination of something's qualities so that an appraisal of its value can be made' (1985b: 218). When evaluating the pupils' musical products, the teachers in this study appeared to draw on their own experience and connoisseurship, as described by Eisner. They would share this evaluation with the pupils, particularly at the end of lessons, discussing the pupils' work openly with the whole class. It has been pointed out (Chapter 7, section 6) that sharing this constructive criticism was regarded as a positive tool to make the students aware of the qualities of successful work. For example, commenting on the evaluation of a Pop song composition project, Emma noted the importance of the pupils' involvement in that process,

because there would be ‘no point in giving them the grade’ if pupils did not understand why (Appendix V, question 51). Sarah organised a whole Blues unit in the form of a class competition. She observed that she let the students grade their own recordings from anonymised tapes but, at the same time, she discussed with students ‘what makes a good performance work’ and ‘what things make it more or less exciting’ (Sarah, Appendix V, questions 2 to 4). These teachers suggested that discussing with the whole class the pupils’ individual and group work, is essential in order to get an idea of appraising and to start picking out ‘problems’ and ‘good things’ (Helen, Appendix V, question 34). These discussions were perceived to be a more appropriate form of assessment than solely judging against fixed criteria. And yet, in spite of the teachers’ observations of the importance of having this conversation, the current emphasis of educational authorities such as the DfES and the QCA appears to be on written criteria.

Another example of the theory-practice issue is to do with the recent introduction of new GCSE syllabus specifications, which describes the content ‘more tightly’ than before. One of the teachers observed that she would not have enough time to cover the contents of the course for the examination and simultaneously build up the pupils’ skills progressively from Year 7 to Year 11. She commented that ‘having all this content now to cover it would be useful to wave some of [it] into Key Stage 3, so that there’s an element of...familiarity and confidence’ (Sarah, Appendix V, question 46).

The perils of educational reform based on cramming contents into the school curriculum have been outlined recently by Eisner (1998) in reference to the

American context. But the American business-driven educational system is nowadays not too far removed from its British counterpart. Great emphasis is put on school results, setting league tables that differentiate between 'successful' and 'failing' schools. The improvement of the school results is then equated to educational improvement. Eisner describes this situation as follows:

It is perfectly possible to set up cram courses....in order to cram more content into the students head so that the school will look good because of its tests scores....In the process...what is taught gets narrowed, tests scores increase marginally, and the public thinks that the schools are getting better. (Eisner, 1998: 2)

Examinations of the current situation have been put forward (e.g. Coulter and Wiens, 2002; Eisner, 1998, 2001) which suggest that the development of judgement by those involved in education is more important than covering many curriculum contents. From the above quotation by Sarah it could be suggested that this applies also to the development of educational criticism by pupils in schools. Some instances of this type of work by participants and their pupils have been offered in Part Three. For example, sharing the evaluation with pupils using 'constructive criticism' (Chapter 7, section 6) and questioning the pupils throughout the lessons following a 'conversational pedagogy' (category 'Teachers' methods', p. 185). The following comment is an example of this type of work:

All their work is recorded on...tape...and they...grade themselves according to the [agreed] scheme....I'll say what I've given them, and...we'll see if the two things match. (...) I...let them listen back and say to themselves 'was my solo syncopated?', 'did my second solo have call and response?', 'did I play the chords accurately?'... 'what could I do to improve it?'... It's a kind of evaluation that they take part in. (Elaine. Appendix V. Questions 36 and 37)

In summary, it can be said that the descriptions of the creative individual found in the literature do not always match the participants' perception of a variety of creative pupil personalities (e.g. introverted and extroverted) and learning styles (i.e. holist and serialist). The teachers in this study observed factors such as the 'school culture' when characterising the environment for creativity that are not always considered in the literature. They appeared not to be much interested in the pupils' creative process and appeared to assess the pupils' work holistically, which illustrates their commitment to connoisseurship.

Participants did not have theories as such but they did theorise and this raises the whole question of how theory actually informs practice. Moore (1978: 15) observes that 'all good practice presupposes a theory'. He suggests that 'teachers are in the grip of some educational theory whether they recognize it or not' (p. 16). However, Pring (1978: 244) argues that practical situations have many variable and unique features 'thereby avoiding capture within an all-embracing theory'. As Pring suggests, the main concern of educational studies should not be generalising theories but helping practitioners to theorise, in other words to 'think more systematically, critically, and intellectually' about their practice.

### **11.3 - Curriculum documentation and practice**

A study of creativity, or indeed any aspect of music education, leads to a consideration of more general issues. It is inevitable that participants would talk about the statutory curriculum. Their perceptions reveal that the National Curriculum represents another instance of the theory-practice gap. The specification is

underpinned by a particular view of education which might or might not be in accordance with the views of individual teachers.

Following the Government's Education Acts (Great Britain, 1988, 1996) all teachers of music in English state schools have to implement the National Curriculum. It became clear from the schools with experienced teachers participating in this study, that the statutory guidelines were 'stored' in the school, but they were not used very much because they were perceived as a starting point (e.g. Patrick, Appendix V, question 41). Participants' observations relating to the music curriculum were coded in two closely connected categories. The first one, 'Music curriculum', included their descriptions of the music activities and schemes of work used to teach in their schools. The second category, 'National Curriculum', consisted of the teachers' comments on the latest version of the English National Curriculum for Music (DfEE and QCA, 1999a). These categories are interconnected. Two interesting points that arise are the different degrees of influence acknowledged by participants of the statutory guidelines on the school curriculum, and their assessment of the recently introduced attainment target for music, with its eight levels.

Although five of the teachers rated the latest version of the National Curriculum for Music positively, four of these teachers also put forward several criticisms. For one of the teachers, the main criticism focussed on the high expectations of the curriculum:

You can't do everything they are guiding you to do in the time...and the class sizes that we have. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 41)

This teacher had previously complained about the ‘battle’ to find resources and space to work with the pupils in her school, especially with composition projects that required a variety of instruments and practice rooms. As stated earlier, one of her colleagues in the music department was not able to have her contract renewed because of budget cuts, and this had increased the size of the music classes to thirty. She observed pupils wanted more time for the composition projects:

The children...only have [music] an hour a week....We asked [them] ‘what do you think [about the unit]?’...A lot of them wanted more time, on that particular project, and they feel that, you know, it’s constrained into making sure they do this, that and the other. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 41)

This teacher observed that one hour a week was not enough for the above music project. And yet one hour a week is common policy in many schools. Contrary to Laura, four teachers (i.e. Patrick, Emma, Helen and Elaine) observed they did not feel pressured by the requirements and expectations for pupils at Key Stage 3 set in statutory guidelines. The following quotation sums up this view:

[The new levels of attainment related with composing and improvising] are incredibly wide...There isn’t a lot of [guidance] as to how the students should be composing, so you kind of fall back on what you know, rather than having a universal...‘all music teachers will teach this way’... I mean two pages isn’t much, is it, for three years of work? (Helen. Appendix V. Question 55)

However, Patrick, Emma, Helen and Elaine worked in schools which had availability of practice rooms and plenty of instruments and resources. In other words the schools’ physical environment was good, and it should be noted that there is no mention of different environments in the curriculum documentation. Moreover, Patrick and Emma’s pupils had two periods of 45 minutes of music each week,

compared with Laura's one period of 60 minutes per week, and that was normally reduced to 50-55 minutes due to registration and waiting for pupils to arrive at the music classroom. This situation is an example of how the implementation of the curriculum plan is affected by time and accommodation. Laura explained that she could not cover everything, teaching only one period of music per week to oversized classes in a rather under-resourced Music Department. This raises issues regarding the differences between 'core subjects' and 'non-core foundation subjects'. Schools are currently recommended to increase the number of lessons for core subjects, thus acknowledging a *de facto* 'second class' status for the non-core subjects, including music. If schools were to fully implement the statutory curriculum they would need to be provided with further resources, especially for those subjects where equipment and space is needed. Therefore this says something about the status of the subject. It might be argued that decision makers do not really give much emphasis to music education in compulsory schooling. The emphasis in the current educational climate is on the investment in literacy and numeracy. Accordingly, it appears that the National Curriculum for Music for Key Stages 1 and 2 is not applied with the same care in all schools. Helen observed the need to adapt her teaching to the previous learning of pupils, especially with the first years of secondary schooling, due to the inconsistency of the pupils' musical development:

Year 7 it's working out what they can do...which...takes a little while. Some [pupils] won't have done music in Primary school at all, and some of them will have done it all their school life, so you're sort of fighting against that as well, trying to get that balance it's quite difficult. (Helen. Appendix V. Question 50)

Although this was an isolated comment, it will be seen as a disturbing one, considering that the statutory National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 has been



in place for ten years. The National Curriculum was designed to prevent pupils having vastly different experiences in different schools. The fact that this teacher takes the situation for granted raises the issue of the viability of implementing a standardised curriculum for all schools. The curriculum, argued Stenhouse (1975), is what teachers and pupils do in the classroom. Pring (1978: 244) observed that 'no theory can be a substitute' for the teachers doing their own theorising. It is apparent from Helen's quotation that having a nationwide 'statutory curriculum' containing the objectives to be achieved does not guarantee the same musical experiences for all pupils in all schools.

Another criticism pointed out by three participants concerned the newly introduced eight levels of the attainment target for music. Elaine observed these levels were 'very difficult to work with', they were written in a 'dense' language and they meant 'nothing at all to the students' (Elaine, Appendix V, question 51). Sarah commented that 'philosophically and to some extent musicologically' the statutory curriculum was 'unclear and confused', particularly in the area of creativity (Sarah, Appendix V, question 65). The strongest view was put forward by Patrick:

These new levels...[are] partly a waste of time...what do these levels mean?...The qualitative differences from one level to another does seem rather spurious...They've tried to make out they're different but they are not. So I think, who has put these together? There are no names, it's tablets of stone handed down, what is this? (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 55)

Although the above three teachers commented that the eight levels of attainment target for music were open to misinterpretation, they said that they did not 'feel constrained' by the latest version of the National Curriculum for Music. They

observed that, on the whole, it was 'a good starting point' and an improvement on previous formulations:

I think the revised form [of the National Curriculum]...is better...It's more skills-based...and if creativity is a skill, then there is certainly, plenty of scope for it within the National Curriculum. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 65)

In fact the positive remarks outnumbered the negative comments, and five of the teachers participating in the study did not have big objections to the printed document. The only seriously contentious issue, as suggested by one teacher, is the use of the statutory curriculum under what Ball (2001) and Jeffrey (2002) call the 'performativity' culture, especially the use of the schools' results stemming from the implementation of the attainment target for music. From August 2000 music teachers in England have been required to give levels to students in Year 7. As from August 2002, Year 8 and Year 9 pupils' achievements will also be marked in this way. As this teacher put it:

Before that...you just had to say whether [pupils] were working towards what was expected for your average fourteen year old, or whether they were achieving that, whether they were working beyond that level, or...achieving exceptional performance... But now, we have to put them across...eight levels. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 56)

This teacher complained that these results would go to the 'league tables' made by the educational authorities and these would be used to set targets for schools:

We have to fill in all these forms, saying...what percentage of our students has got this level...or the other...and...next September, we'll be having a lot of pie charts [by the DfEE]...and then...they'll say to me...you need to get five per cent more of

your students getting level six than you did last year. So what will I do? Well, I'll just make it up. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 55)

Perhaps this is the reason why two of the most experienced teachers participating in the study gave minor importance to the statutory guidelines. Patrick commented that he saw them 'very much as a starting point, and not as an end point', and that all the things included in the National Curriculum would be covered in the classroom 'if you are teaching in a genuinely musical way':

I know that our [school] curriculum is like that...so in that sense...I can look through [the National Curriculum] and I can see... 'yes we do all that, fine'. And just put it away...so I'm not too bothered by it. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 41)

The same point was made by Emma:

I try not to view [the National Curriculum] at all, really, if possible. I did use to look at it a lot when I was studying, and learned it off-by-heart... (Emma. Appendix V. Question 67)

In their reviews of Patrick's school the OFSTED inspectors commented on the work in music positively, even though this teacher did not list the attainment targets from the statutory curriculum in his Schemes of Work (Appendix VII, p. 431) as officially required. Instead he included the following statement in his scheme of work:

[National Curriculum targets] are not specifically listed for each module. When we attempted this we found that we were listing them all for every module. Through our detailed planning and by engaging in genuinely musical discourse in our lessons we are...covering all the essential components of a comprehensive musical education. (Patrick's *KS3 Schemes of Work*, section 6.5, Appendix VII)

What arises from these quotations, is that it is possible to confront the limitations of the 'performativity culture', and that this can be started by the teachers in the schools, as illustrated by the two examples given above. The use of school results as a ready-to-use tool for accountability is one of the main characteristics of this 'culture'. It has been argued that politicians favour numeric results because they are simple and can 'demonstrate' that objectives are being met. In a well-known critique of the objectives model of curriculum, Stenhouse (1975) pointed out a similar argument:

The demand for objectives is a demand for justification... As such it is part of a political dialogue rather than an educational one. It is not about curriculum design, but rather an expression of irritation in the face of the problem of accountability in education. I believe that politicians will have to face the fact that there is no easy road to accountability via objectives. (Stenhouse, 1975: 77)

At the same time this 'performativity culture', argues Ball (2001), takes time from teachers in schools. For instance staff rooms are less used today than twenty years ago, and the social interactions and exchange of experiences between teachers is getting lost in secondary activities (e.g. filling up forms). The additional threat for schools, and indeed for the educational experiences of pupils, is that they may be directed to pass examinations rather than to have a positive and valuable musical experience. It might be suggested that if this 'culture' is not challenged, there is a risk of endangering the education of children, thus achieving the opposite result of the one originally intended. Drawing a parallel with Stenhouse's (1975: 77) description of the position of the curriculum designers, the present performativity culture offers a model which fixes the designers' eyes so firmly on a destination that they do not 'notice the pond' in the path until they are 'waist deep in it'. There is a

risk of assessing what is easy to operationalise, and in so doing, ‘the really important outcomes of education will be under emphasised’ (p. 72).

#### **11.4 – Teacher education and training**

It would be unwise to draw direct implications from the present study for the training of secondary school music teachers. Participants, however, made comments regarding their teacher training, and this was one of the three strands that emerged from the analysis of their backgrounds in the previous chapter. The aim here is not to make detailed recommendations for the training of teachers, but to discuss a number of issues relevant to the education of beginner teachers in secondary schools who are completing the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

In Chapter 10 it is suggested that if teachers need to work with the different music preferences of pupils, one of the implications would be that they need practical knowledge of different styles to be able to assess the students’ compositions in the contemporary classroom. Similar suggestions have been referred to in recent studies by Berkley (2001), Green (2000, 2001) and Pilsbury and Alston (1996). It has also been observed in the second section of this chapter that the development of educational ‘judgement’ in trainee teachers is also important. As Eisner suggests, educational practice is a ‘complicated affair’ (Eisner, 1985a: 104). The process of developing educational judgement is one that continues through a person’s teaching career. Philpott (2001) and Young (2001) agree that the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses is crucial for newly qualified music teachers. Under current regulations Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are allowed to

spend 10% of their teaching time doing such courses, and costs have to be met by their schools during what is called the 'induction period' (TTA, 2002a). This period lasts for three terms, which have to be completed by all NQTs with the guidance of an induction tutor. One way of developing educational judgement recently re-examined by Eisner (2001) is the use of videotaped lessons by trainee teachers. Its purpose is to analyse and discuss the teaching practice of students with their peers and their tutors. This would also include the use of videotaped lessons by experienced teachers. Interestingly some participants in this study observed that they had never watched themselves teaching on video. They acknowledged this experience as a positive and valuable one (section 2, Chapter 12).

Nowadays teachers have to have the sort of professional knowledge and expertise which enables them to cope with changing statutory guidelines. The music curriculum as set out in official documents has been altered over the past ten years, with each document replacing the previous one: DES (1992), DFE (1995), DfEE and QCA (1999a). This trend is likely to continue in coming years, and what emerges from this study is that teachers will be required to examine statutory documents in a critical manner. It might be expected that training institutions would develop teachers' educational judgement through the use of intellectual discussion, with reference to topics such as creativity and the non-predictability of teaching. However these issues are not included in the *Requirements for Courses of Initial Teacher Training* (DfEE, Circular Number 4/98). Quite the opposite. One of its four sections is focussed on 'Monitoring, Assessment, Recording, Reporting and Accountability'. The fourth section, headed 'Other Professional Requirements', focuses primarily on the teachers' professional duties and legal responsibilities and reference is made to

several Government Acts. This leaves only two sections of the requirements dealing with subject knowledge ('Knowledge and Understanding') and teaching ('Planning, Teaching and Class Management'). There is no reference to the need for teachers to have intellectual skills which will enable them to evaluate official documents and develop their ability to make critical judgements.

The requirements for PGCE courses have been recently reformulated by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA, 2002b). The current requirements are shorter and clearer. Less reference is made to DfEE documents, and Government Acts are not mentioned. The four sections of the previous specifications are simplified into three headings: 'Professional Values and Practice', 'Knowledge and Understanding' and 'Teaching', which includes three subheadings focussing on 'Planning, expectations and targets', 'Monitoring and Assessment' and 'Teaching and class management'. References to the pupils' individual differences are incorporated in the new document. Teachers are required to identify:

More able pupils...those who are failing to achieve their potential in learning, and those who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. (TTA, 2002: 10)

Teachers are also expected to take account of 'the varying interests, experiences and achievements of boys and girls, and pupils from different cultural and ethnic groups' (TTA, 2002: 12). The comments by the teachers in this study exemplify the pupils' varying interests and characteristics, and the diverse nature of practice that teachers encounter in their day-to-day work. This seems to be an issue that was not given much emphasis in these teachers' training. They were aware of the varying

characteristics of pupils from different backgrounds due to their teaching experiences in their current and previous schools (e.g. Laura).

As pointed out in chapters 7 and 10, participants perceived their PGCE in a variety of ways. On the one hand, there were comments regarding the course as being a very good start for a teaching career in schools (e.g. 'the course was excellent', Patrick, Appendix VI). Helen and Patrick felt they had benefited from learning and working with styles of music little known to them until then. On the other hand there were comments suggesting unfulfilled expectations. Sarah, for example, observed that 'musically standards were low' and that she found this aspect 'uninspiring' (Appendix VI). Helen and Patrick, the same teachers that observed they benefited from learning different styles of music, felt that the training on composition offered during the PGCE was not as good as they would have liked (Chapter 7, section 7). Patrick explained that if he was asked to compose now, he could 'do a much better job' than after his PGCE because of the teaching he had done, and through the connections he had made with his own musical background. The difficult task for PGCE providers, is fulfilling the expectations of both the students and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) within the nine months of training, 2/3 of which are spent on teaching practice in schools (TTA, 2002b: 15).

It has also been observed in Chapter 9 (section 7), that the current emphasis on planning by the educational authorities could be hindering the opportunities for the teachers' development of their pedagogical creativity. The responsibility for NQTs to plan their lessons with aims and objectives and to 'tick off' the results at the end, may take away the unpredictability of educational encounters. Creative teaching,



argues Plummeridge (1991: 124), is 'an attitude towards practice'. The creative teacher is the person who is able to transform 'prescribed outlines into vital and dynamic encounters' (p. 123), making connections between the worlds of music and music education. Participating teachers nevertheless observed that this teaching approach was acquired after some years of teaching, when they felt confident to teach 'by heart':

When I started my teaching...I planned every...ten minutes. (...) I think the freedom that I have...now has come from that starting point... I know that I can go in [to]...any class and...teach a lesson...and it will all be there, because that's drawing from my own experience. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 25)

### **11.5 – Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been on some implications arising from the research. It is observed that teachers are required to judge research findings and curriculum documents in order to adapt any recommendations into their particular practices. A point is raised about the gap between theory and practice. Participants commented, for example, on the different learning styles of pupils and the different kinds of creative personalities, in contrast with the lists of traits of the creative individual considered in the literature. The process of creativity is often examined in the music curriculum literature as a series of stages. Participants' comments, however, seemed to focus on pupils' products and they had little to say about the process. When evaluating the pupils' musical products these teachers demonstrated their 'connoisseurship', and illustrated the process of sharing their ideas with the pupils. Another aspect of the theory-practice issue discussed is the peril of cramming

contents into the school curriculum. It is suggested that the development of educational criticism by pupils in schools is more important than covering many curriculum contents.

The participants' descriptions of their lessons are a powerful account of the positive and supportive relationship between these teachers and their pupils. An implication from this study is that teachers who foster creativity in pupils need to have this sort of relationship.

It is observed that participants regarded the last version of the English National Curriculum for Music (DfEE and QCA, 1999a) positively. Some criticisms were nevertheless stated concerning the difficulties in implementing the curriculum due to lack of space and resources, and the lack of clarity surrounding the newly introduced eight levels of attainment. In addition, the current performativity culture of the educational authorities is seen as a hindrance to the implementation of the programme.

It is suggested that the development of educational judgement and the development of musical knowledge are both important aspects in the initial education and training of teachers. One way of developing the ability to make informed judgements is through the use of videotaped lessons. This was acknowledged by participants during this enquiry.

# CHAPTER 12

## CONCLUSIONS

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### 12.1 – Summary of the main findings and implications

In Part One different meanings of the word creativity have been examined from several points of view and it is maintained that creativity is likely to be interpreted in different ways by different people. This fact was the key in identifying the research ‘problem’ or area of enquiry. All music teachers in England are nowadays required to teach pupils to create and develop musical ideas and it was considered likely that teachers had different perceptions of creativity. These perceptions had not been empirically researched. Therefore the central aim of the enquiry was set: to investigate how music teachers in secondary schools interpret the meanings of creativity.

In chapters 2 to 4 previous research studies relating to conceptions of creativity, creativity in music education, and teachers’ perceptions of creativity are reviewed; consideration is given to ideas stemming from areas including philosophy, musicology, aesthetics, psychology, education and music education. From this review, a fourfold framework is outlined specially for the study of music teachers’ perceptions of creativity. The themes of this framework are: creative pupils; the environment for creativity; the creative process; the creative product. The main aim of the investigation is divided into three more operational research questions:

*A) What are these schoolteachers’ perceptions of creativity?*

*B) What are the similarities and differences between the literature on creativity and these teachers' perceptions?*

*C) In what ways do these teachers' musical and professional experiences influence their perceptions of creativity?*

The methodology, presented in Part Two, was designed and piloted in the light of the three research questions, and the findings of the investigation with the final six participants have been presented and discussed in Part Three. It is apparent that the fourfold framework is a useful tool for understanding the ideas of participants. The original framework is developed with twenty-eight categories and sub-categories.

The first research question - *A) What are these schoolteachers' perceptions of creativity?* - is examined in chapters 7 and 8, with emphasis on conceptual issues and practical issues regarding the teaching of composition and improvisation. Teachers' different views of creativity are analysed and discussed with reference to the four themes of the framework. The teachers' own creativity is considered in a separate section. All teachers perceived the school as an environment where creativity, understood as imagination manifested in any valued pursuit ('new' concept), can be developed in all pupils, although they did not agree on how the word creativity was to be described. Participants identified at least two different learning styles in creative pupils ('adaptors' and 'innovators'). It is apparent that the issue for educators is how to cope with the different learning styles, behaviour and motivation in the classroom. Examples of how participants coped with these issues during music lessons are set out in Chapter 8.

The second research question is dealt with in Chapter 9 - *B) What are the similarities and differences between the literature on creativity and these teachers' perceptions?*

These teachers' comments on practical issues, such as the pupils' different learning styles and the problems related with under-resourced music departments, are to be rarely found in the music education literature. The creative personality is described in the literature with lists of traits which do not always match the descriptions offered by participants. Although the general literature on creativity gives teachers a key role in setting the environment for creativity, music curriculum writers tend to focus on organisational issues and give only limited attention to the complexity of the teachers' role. Participants suggested positive group dynamics between pupils composing and, in contrast with some previous studies, did not find group activities stressful and time wasting. In line with the literature they all had some criteria to assess 'creativity' in the pupils' work even though two teachers preferred to use other terms. However these criteria were largely negotiated.

The third research question - *C) In what ways do these teachers' musical and professional experiences influence their perceptions of creativity?* - is considered in Chapter 10. It is apparent that these experiences can be seen as constituting three strands: the musical strand, the teacher-training strand, and the professional teaching strand. It is argued that in the case of these teachers the most influential factor is the musical strand, which includes past and present musical experiences, undergraduate education and musical activities undertaken in addition to teaching. It is suggested that this strand has a strong bearing on the participants' perceptions of creative pupils, the environment for creativity, the creative process and the creative product. The teachers with a variety of experiences with different music styles were more

prepared to accept as 'creative products' the work by pupils who did not necessarily keep to the style or the structure of the activity originally given by the teacher. It is also suggested that having experiences with a variety of music styles and activities, including composition, helped some of the teachers to describe the conditions to facilitate the appropriate environment for creativity. It is argued that the professional teaching strand of two of the teachers has a bearing on their perceptions of creative pupils, in particular the relationship between children's musical creativity and home background. The teacher-training strand appears to be the factor with less influence on the perceptions of these teachers.

In Chapter 11 implications arising from the research are discussed under three separate headings: (a) research, theory and practice, (b) curriculum documentation and practice, and (c) teacher education and training. The contentious relationship between research and practice is illustrated with the differences between the participants' perceptions and the literature. It is observed that the creative process is examined at length in the literature, in contrast with participants' comments that appeared to focus on the product rather than the process. In the section on curriculum documentation it is pointed out that participants regarded the statutory guidelines positively. Some criticisms were nevertheless observed focussing on the lack of clarity of the newly introduced eight levels of the 'attainment target' and the current 'performativity culture' of the educational authorities. A number of issues relevant to the education of beginner teachers are discussed, including the changing statutory requirements and the current emphasis on planning by the educational authorities. Following the positive experience of participants, the use of videotaped lessons as a basis for discussion with student teachers is considered.

Finally, what the present enquiry highlights is the complexity of the term creativity. This has been exemplified through the variety of observations put forward by these teachers. During the 1960s and 70s a debate took place regarding the introduction of 'creative activities' in education and music education. This debate has been reviewed in Part One. Nevertheless, the word creativity is nowadays almost everywhere and it is by no means confined to music or the arts. It is to be found in nearly all areas of life, including sciences, politics and the media. In educational circles creativity is one of those words that tends to command respect and carries with it the seal of approval. Thoughtful consideration is required by music teachers, policy makers and teacher trainers when using this term with reference to music education.

## **12.2 – Further methodological issues**

The teachers participating in the study were videotaped for a number of lessons that included composition and improvisation activities. This method, described in Part Two, was piloted with three teachers and subsequently refined (Chapter 6). It was then used to allow six participants to reflect on their own ideas. In the final interviews teachers were presented with extracts of their own taped lessons and asked to comment upon them. The extracts were the starting point from which teachers explained their views on musical creativity. This enabled an explanation of the participants' perceptions in their own words. The use of this methodology proved to be an appropriate way of exploring the teachers' perceptions. There are three categories from the analysis of the interviews that have not yet been examined. The first two categories, 'Video reactions' and 'Teachers self-criticism', include the



teachers' unexpected reactions when watching their own videotaped lessons and some self-critical comments on classroom situations. The third, 'Research process evaluation', includes their assessment of the whole experience. These three categories overlap within a common 'methodological' theme. They are discussed here with particular reference to the use of video and its effects during the research process.

The possibility of retrieving extracts of lessons from the beginning and the end of a unit of work helped participants to see progression in pupils. These comments, along with any unexpected reactions when watching the extracts, were categorised as 'Video reactions':

I'm very impressed actually!....I was very impressed with the improvising overall...I [became] absorbed. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 17)

This particular method helped these teachers to acknowledge things that had not been perceived during the lessons. For example, in one of Patrick's lessons he was busy accompanying at the electric keyboard, conducting the whole group and giving feedback to individual soloists, all at the same time. All this 'action' did not let this teacher see to what extent in his large classroom all the pupils at the percussion instruments were engaged with the mood of the music. After watching extracts from this lesson he commented positively:

One thing I didn't notice was the amount of back heads [moving with the rhythm of the music]... Which is interesting...because at the time you filter a lot of that out, you are not aware of the extent of it. (Patrick. Appendix V. Question 28)

An added value of the use of video in this research design was that teachers were able to see pupils at work in situations where they were not present. Emma made the following remarks after watching some extracts of her pupils working in practice rooms without her supervision, where they were refining the arrangements of a pop song they had composed for a music festival:

I thought it was fantastic...Because they were all working just like I would expect to see a group of adults working together or any sort of band...I'd like to show videos like that to [the other classes] to say this is how a group should work together. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 56)

Perceiving things that were missed during the lessons brought about two types of reaction. One was of positive surprise; for instance, realising how good or how impressive the pupils' work had been. Another was self-criticism ('Teachers' self-criticism' category):

I noticed earlier that I was talking SO fast. I am surprised anybody could have heard anything I said actually...it was very interesting to see that...because I realised that probably a lot of them didn't get it. (Emma. Appendix V. Questions 16 and 18)

The opportunity to watch themselves teaching made it possible for teachers to identify areas that could be improved, in both their teaching and in the planning of the units of work. As stated above, Emma realised that she talked too fast when working with her pupils. Reflecting on her planning and organisation, Laura thought of giving the pupils the tape recorder to work on their own, instead of being present during the recording of their compositions:

Coming around tape recording them and asking them questions...I found that I was being intrusive. Because when I came in...they felt that they had to perform that....

I...should have...just given them the tape recorder [and left the room]...We should get those little tape recorders in each area. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 50)

Several examples regarding the teachers' self-analysis of their practice have been offered in Part Three (e.g. Chapter 7, section 4). The above quotations are illustrative instances of how this self-analysis was facilitated by the use of videotaped extracts during the final interviews.

Another effect of the present research design is that it helped diminishing the uncertainty of the teachers' descriptions of accounts that relied on memory. This was one of the conclusions reached by delegates in a seminar at the Annual Conference of the European Educational Research Association, and reported by Odena (2002). Block (2000) examines some of the problems encountered by researchers when interpreting interview data, in particular those encountered when one interviewee has different and sometimes contradictory versions of the same account. It is apparent that watching videotaped extracts of the same lessons that are being recalled by interviewees facilitates their explanations. Although the camera cannot tape everything that goes on inside a classroom, the recordings do provide evidence which can then be used for discussion with the teachers. In this way the personal accounts rely not only on memories as in much traditional ethnography; thus they can be deemed as more reliable. It is noticeable that this methodology facilitated the eliciting of the teachers' thinking. This was illustrated in both the quality of details and the precision of the participants' accounts, and in the quantity of comments arising from the teachers watching videotaped extracts from their own lessons.

As noted in Chapter 11 some participants commented they had never watched themselves teaching on video. They acknowledged this new experience as a constructive and valuable one. These comments were coded within the 'Research process evaluation' category. They were generally made at the end of the interviews, and although these observations were brief, all of them were of a positive nature:

It was very interesting for me to...see the areas where I was happy...and not so happy with [the teaching]. (Emma. Appendix V. Question 69)

It has been an interesting experience. (Sarah. Appendix V. Question 83)

Thank you very much (...) The class were very excited to be chosen...I'd really like to show them...that video, especially their process when we were in the rehearsal room. (Laura. Appendix V. Question 58)

The above quotations illustrate that the research process was fruitful for all those involved. For these teachers the methodology had a positive spin-off for teaching. For the researcher the empirical part of the investigation, as well as providing the data for the analysis, was a fulfilling learning experience, not as much as knowing about research but about 'doing research'.

The process of research is never as straightforward as is sometimes supposed. To begin with, finding prospective participants was a time consuming task which deferred the start of the pilot study for several weeks. Going into schools carrying camera equipment was a 'novelty' for pupils and other members of staff. At the beginning of each series of visits it was necessary to go to the school for the preliminary interview, to 'gain access' and to set dates for subsequent visits. Visits had to be made in order to be 'assimilated' as a member of the school community

and not as an 'outsider' or one-day visitor. Unexpected sickness of some participants also extended the project for a number of weeks. These factors delayed the intended timescale, making the process more time consuming and costly than had been foreseen.

When videotaping the classroom observations pupils were at the beginning excited. It was not until half way through the first classroom observation that they would ignore the camera and work as if the researcher was not there. Although they generally reacted with disappointment when told that the cameraman was not working for a commercial TV channel, most of them were eager and happy that their teacher had been 'chosen' to participate in a research project. All the pupils seemed to ignore the researcher and participate in the music lessons as normal. During one recording a pupil switched off 'accidentally' the camera's electricity cable. This is the sort of incident that is rarely referred to in research texts.

### **12.3 - Limitations of the study**

This study is an insight into the perceptions of six teachers over a limited period of time. Denicolo and Pope (1990) observe the complexity of the teachers' mind and consciousness, and the difficulties of investigating them over a restricted time frame. The participants' quotations give an impression of their reflections at a precise moment in their professional lives. However it is not known whether the teachers' comments would have been different if interviewed on a different occasion. It would be interesting to carry out a replication study with the same participants at some point in the future, to see how their perceptions have or have not changed over time.

Another way of approaching this type of research would be to conduct a study focussing on one teacher, which would require visiting a single school for an extended period. An advantage would be gaining a deeper understanding of the particular teacher's thinking. However, such an approach may limit the variety of data in respect of the research questions identified here. This research project was in contrast of those of Fryer (1989) and Runco (1993) in that it avoided the completion of questionnaires by a large sample of teachers. Focussing on only six participants allowed deeper examination of their perceptions. However, one limitation is that it was very time consuming for the teachers and the researcher. Finding prospective participants willing to give so much of their time, allowing the researcher to go into the school and videotape them, was an added difficulty. After the data collection, the transcription and analysis of interviews was also very lengthy. A research process using a quantitative methodology would have probably been shorter.

The coding of the data was eased using the software package NVivo. It might be suggested that quick methods employing technology could be utilized to produce under analysed reports. However it needs to be noted that, in fact, the analysis of the data does not depend on the computer program, but the computer makes the process of the analysis less time consuming and, in some ways, the process is likely to be more thorough and systematic than if the analysis was carried out manually. As pointed out in Chapter 7 an 87.2 % of the interview transcripts were categorised in the analysis (236,636 characters from a total of 271,438). The remaining 12.8 % are the interviewer questions, and the teachers' repetitions and mannerisms that were not adding anything to their ideas.

The analysis relies on what participants said during the interviews. An important issue to consider when relying on personal accounts is the existence of 'alternative realities'. Accounts arising from interviews rely on the interpretation of the facts by individuals, who re-create and filter them through their own experience. As Cox (1999b) points out, the study of teachers' own assessments of their experience enlarges our understanding of their professional lives. It is noted in the methodology that the purpose was not to look for the generalisation of a theory but to illustrate through the music teachers' voice some of the issues in the area of creativity. In particular it has identified these teachers' sense of dedication and commitment and also provides insights into the relationship between pupils and teachers. However, the conclusions of this study, using Eisner's (1979: ix) words, need to be 'placed in the perspective of the context in which they are to be used'. Although they may be indicative, they can not be generalised.

#### **12.4 – Evaluation of the findings in terms of the teachers' role in creative teaching and strategies for teacher training**

This investigation illustrates that teachers have a key role to play when working with activities which are meant to develop the pupils' musical creativity. The teachers' role in providing a conducive environment necessary for these activities is crucial: motivating, praising, challenging, encouraging when necessary and working *with* the pupils in a supportive relationship. As observed in the previous chapter, the creative teacher is a person who is able to transform 'prescribed outlines into vital and dynamic encounters' (Plummeridge, 1991: 123). For this purpose the creative teacher

has to take into account the pupils' individual learning and musical development, modifying and adapting the activities with those in mind. As exemplified throughout Part Three with the participants' comments, teachers need to take into account the pupils different learning styles. At least two different types of pupils were identified and discussed - 'adaptor' and 'innovator' - which favour different types of work that parallel the serialist and holist learning styles described by Entwistle (1981, 1991). 'Adaptor' pupils prefer to work following a series of small steps, whilst 'innovator' pupils work more comfortably without a set of prescribed steps, taking the activity as a whole. Music teachers, therefore, need to be sensitive to such possible differences if they intend to cater for all pupils, and to provide appropriate feedback to the particular needs of each student. As discussed in Chapter 8 participants observed that questioning the students about their work facilitated an understanding of concepts, the necessary agreement between pupils and teacher on what was to be assessed, and the development of music skills. This conversational pedagogy was also used to evaluate the pupils' work, discussing with the whole class the characteristics of their compositions and improvisations and providing, through 'educational criticism' (Eisner, 1985b, 1991), the bridge needed by some students to experience the qualities of their work, making relationships between new and previously learned musical concepts. The teachers' role is central in developing this conversational pedagogy which leads to educational 'connoisseurship' or the enhancement of 'the art of appreciation' (Eisner, 1985a: 105).

Taking into account the mixed comments by participants on their teacher training and the relationships between the teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions, it would appear that beginner teachers need opportunities to work creatively in



different musical styles during teacher training. Participants that had experience with composition and improvisation in a variety of musical styles were more articulate describing the conditions that could facilitate the appropriate environment for creativity, and the factors that could hinder such an environment. They were also capable of assessing as creative the work of some pupils that did not keep within the given style or the structure of the activities originally proposed by the teacher. As observed in Chapter 10, this investigation corroborates suggestions by Alston (1980) and Pilsbury and Alston (1996) that point to a need for teachers to have appropriate composing experience if they are to be more able to assess musical compositions from a wide range of styles. This is necessary not only for the assessment of the final music products but, as Berkley (2001) points out, for the teachers to engage in the pupils' composing process. This process can vary depending on the pupils' experience and the music style of the piece (Green, 1990, 2000) and teachers need to be able to provide a supportive environment in all cases. Arguably then, work with composition and improvisation in a variety of styles would need to be included as a key element in music teacher training courses.

A case may be made for teacher education providers to offer opportunities for beginner teachers to criticise and appraise government documents. As observed in Chapter 11, the educational system and its current policies are being revised on a regular basis. For instance the music curriculum as set out in official documents has been altered over the past ten years - DES (1992), DFE (1995), DfEE and QCA (1999a) - and this trend is likely to continue if historical precedent is anything to go by. Practitioners will require an expertise that enables them to understand and adapt appropriately to changing statutory requirements. This sort of knowledge is likely to

be developed in teacher training courses through the use of intellectual discussion in workshops and seminars aimed at examining statutory documents in a critical manner.

### **12.5 – Suggestions for further research**

During the last decade there has been an increase of research focussed on creativity in music education, in contrast to the relative lack of interest in this field in the 1980s. This has been reflected in several special symposiums at research conferences, such as those organised by the Society for Research in Psychology of Music and Music Education (SRPMME, now the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research [SEMPRE]), the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (ESCOM), and the biannual International Conference of Research in Music Education (RIME). The interest in creativity and music education has also been evident from the number of articles published in journals by English speaking scholars including Berkley (2001), Brinkman (1999), Burnard (1999, 2000a), Byrne and Sheridan (2001), MacDonald and Miell (2000), and Savage (2003). It may be argued that increased research in this field coincided with a rising number of research studies in several other areas of music education. Indeed, the number of academic journals on music education has grown in the last decade, with the incorporation of new titles: *Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* (1990), *Research Studies in Music Education* (1993), *Philosophy of Music Education Review* (1993), *Music Education Research* (1999), *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* (1999) and *Music Education International* (2002). This increasing volume of research has been documented by the British Educational Research Association in

the document *Mapping Music Education Research in the UK* (BERA, 2001). The pace of development of music education research has also been outlined by Hanley and Montgomery (2002) and Hickey (2002) in *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, published by the American Music Educators National Conference (MENC, 2002).

Although these developments will be regarded by music educators as encouraging, it is necessary to recognise that research in music education is still fairly limited in comparison with other areas; for a long time it was a minor field in the university-led arena of educational research. The recent formation of a Special Interest Group (SIG) on Music Education within the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the biggest professional association of its kind, is an indication that music educators are more concerned with research than they were previously.

Amongst the current lines of enquiry focussed on creativity, children oriented studies is an area for further research. Burnard (2000b, 2002) is a pioneering figure in this field. There are issues to do with how pupils perceive creativity in composition and improvisation, how they assess the work of their peers, how their musical creativity can be developed, and how their learning styles affect the processes and outcomes of activities that are meant to develop their musical creativity. These are just an example of the variety of challenging topics that need to be studied. Taking into account the participants' comments in the present study with regard to the positive interactions between students working in group-composition projects, it would be interesting to further research group-work dynamics - Fautley (2002) has recently completed a study of secondary school pupils composing in groups, with the aim to

develop a model of teaching and learning. Other fields for further enquiry include the pupils' processes of composing and the building of pupils' improvisatory skills. Work on the former has been reviewed in *Children Composing* (Sundin, Folkestad, and McPherson, 1998), which examines research on children composing using computers. Some studies focussing on improvisation have been conducted in jazz education, and reviewed by Beale (2001).

Another area that might be developed is the study of the teachers' role in creative teaching and strategies for teacher training. Within the current 'performativity culture' teachers in state schools are required to follow statutory documents that incorporate references to creativity across the curriculum and, at the same time, they are regularly expected to deliver better examination results to the educational authorities. The effects of this dual responsibility on generalist teachers have been discussed by Ball (2001) and Jeffrey (2002). It would appear that a similar inquiry focussed on beginner music teachers would provide insights of the problems and possibilities of the development of the teachers' pedagogical creativity and how it could be better supported in music teacher training courses.

Comparative studies in creativity in the area of music education are relatively underdeveloped. Lepherd (1995: 3) observes that international study of educational systems offers music educators 'a broader perspective within which they can assess and attempt to resolve their own problems'. A report published by the Information Network on Education in Europe (EURYDICE, 1997) describes the educational climate of reforms and the production of new curricula in many European countries in recent years. This situation has re-opened the issue of creativity and its

interpretation, especially in music education. It has been illustrated in the present study that teachers have their own perceptions of creativity and these perceptions influence their pedagogic approach and assessment of activities. The incorporation of the concept of creativity into the statutory requirements of England and Wales, compared with other educational systems, is another issue yet to be examined.

Charting the experiences that are likely to influence teachers' perceptions of creativity is another area for further enquiry. Participants in this study were influenced by their past teachers. It would be interesting to know how far past teachers influenced their thinking regarding musical creativity. By doing this it would be possible to investigate the reproduction of ideas from one generation of practitioners to the next, analysing similarities and differences in their perceptions.

This study has aimed to reveal some of the complexities embraced within the concept of creativity and its use in music education. Using extracts of videotaped lessons as a basis for discussion with teachers is a methodology that has not been previously developed in this area. The purpose has been to show some of the perceptions of secondary school music teachers and the influence of their musical, teacher-training and professional teaching experiences on their perceptions. An attempt has been made to consider the findings within the wider context of music education.

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# APPENDIX I

Invitation letter for participation

Oscar Òdena Caballol  
Music and Drama Academic Group  
Institute of Education University of London  
20 Bedford Way  
London WC1H 0AL

18 October 2000

Dear Colleague,

I am a music teacher currently undertaking a research project about secondary school music teachers' views on creativity, as part of my current studies at the Institute of Education, University of London. My tutor for this study is Dr. Charles Plummeridge. In order to gather primary information, a number of secondary school music teachers working in England will be invited to participate.

The study will only require three classroom observations during the second term of the academic year 2000-2001, and a 60 minutes informal conversation about the classes observed. Please note that information will remain confidential. No names will appear in my final report.

If you are able to participate could you please return the enclosed self-addressed envelope as soon as convenient. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information. I can be reached at the above address, or by e-mail at [oscarodena@hotmail.com](mailto:oscarodena@hotmail.com)

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Oscar Òdena Caballol

# APPENDIX II

Information letter to the Head of school

Oscar Odena Caballol  
Institute of Education Univ. of London  
Music and Drama  
20 Bedford Way  
London WC1H 0AL  
Tel: 0207 612 6740  
Fax: 0207 612 6741

[To the school Head teacher]

22 January, 2001

Dear [school Head teacher],

As a research student at the Institute of Education University of London I am carrying out a study on secondary school music teachers' views of creativity. Ms [name of teacher] has agreed to participate in the study and has suggested that I observe one of her Year 9 groups. I hope the visits will not cause any inconvenience to the school. I would like to videotape three lessons and Ms [name of teacher] would comment upon selected extracts of her lessons during a later interview. The tapes would not be included in the final report and would remain strictly confidential.

Please note that the names of the teachers participating in the study will be changed for confidentiality purposes. The focus of my study is on music teachers' views of creativity as manifested during music activities (e.g. composition). Please note that any school name or school descriptions will **not** appear in the final write up.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information. I can be reached by phone at 0870 [phone number] or by e-mail at ooomdmps@ioe.ac.uk.

I look forward to visiting your school in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Oscar Odena

# APPENDIX III

Interview transcripts of the pilot studies

**FIRST PILOT.**

**Interview date: 27-6-2000. Location: Institute of Education, room 938.**

*Videotaped excerpt 1 description: two 9<sup>th</sup> year students are in a small room rehearsing a mid-tempo pop song composed by them. Both sing and one of them plays the guitar. They show their work to the teacher and discuss the structure of the song with him, including an arrangement on the keyboard that they want to add at the end of the lyrics. It is part of a Pop Project that is to be finished by the end of the term.*

Oscar: Could you explain me how does this project work?

John: It's a combination of all the work in Key Stage 3, in year seventh, eighth and ninth, so it's their last project before they formally don't do music any more and...[another teacher opens the door by mistake causing a short interruption]...does it still recording?

Oscar: Yes, it's ok. Yes.

John: So it is the last project before –obviously they have chosen it as an option or not- so we do this as a big way of ending the whole music curriculum and have this big festival, pop festival, where each class will form their own pop groups, small groups (two, three, four, five) and then they all perform in front of their whole year group at the end of the academic year. So they can take ideas they have already done or used in year nine, eight and seven. For example there were some blues songs, there were some raps, some reggae songs, and they are taking it a step further into this Pop Project. It's just a fun way to end of the year.

Oscar: Do they cover songs or they make their own songs?

John: Some have used cover songs and, when we had more time we made sure that the schema worked, that they had an original song and a cover version. I think it's important. But I think it is also important for them, more important, to create their own music and words, and lyrics...and music.

Oscar: Would you try to describe your role as a teacher, with the pupils in this project?

John: Yeah, I mean I try to take a back sit, you know, I organise them, put them in the rooms, get them what they want, what instruments they want...it is more of a facilitator and... you know, in organising them I try not to put too much input. Obviously they need guidance and pulling in the right direction, but the work has to come from them and they are quite motivated being pop music, and it is close to them and it's accessible and with it on all day, so it is relatively easy for them.

Oscar: We could watch the next one.

*Videotaped excerpt 2 description: The same Pop Project with 9<sup>th</sup> year pupils. In another small rehearsing room five boys play their adaptation of a rock song by Freddie Mercury. One of the students plays the drums, another the guitar, two pupils sing and the last one plays a tambourine. When they finish they discuss their work with the teacher, including the structure of the adaptation and the balance between instruments and voice. The teacher suggests that a guitar rift may be out of tune with the melody and they sing this part of the song again. They discuss the balance of the piece taking into account the need to perform it in front*



*of an audience, and all have a chance to say their opinions. They finally agree to keep down the volume of drums and guitar while singing the lyrics.*

Oscar: Well, we had here a group of boys doing their song. Again, would you try to describe your role as a teacher with the pupils and their song?

John: Yes, I think with this group, particularly, they are quite talented. To start with, I listened to their pop song and... you know, it is quite coherent even in an early stage... so I wanted to act more as a facilitator and let them organise their song how they wanted to by questioning them through some direct questioning, they can focus on different elements of their compositions to put right... or make better, or improve. For example the guitar rift, you know, it is obviously not the same when is the Freddie Mercury used in the original song. I think one of the questions was: 'Listen to the guitar rift on its own. Is that the original as the intended or is that how do you wanted it?'. It is not to say do this or do that, but just to ask 'have you tried this, have you tried that?' and 'Does that work? Does that doesn't?'

Oscar: In this case and the first one you let them play first and... in a way you don't appear in the picture only after they have played. Is it because you see this more helpful for them?

John: Yes. First it is difficult to comment on anything if I haven't heard it, by then describing it verbally. You know, it is much easier to comment on it if I hear the actual piece they have been working...

Oscar: One of the pupils said they were going to perform this in a festival...

John: Yes. Again, is the festival at the end of the year and each group working on Pop Project have a pop song to be performed in front of their whole year group in their final assembly. So obviously that rises the profile and put some more onus on them to get something done, and they enjoy it... Oscar: They were quite excited.

John: ...yeah, I think they were excited and, you know, it rises the platform of the whole Project and give them something to work towards.

Oscar: Let's watch the next one.

*Videotaped excerpt 3 description: Later during the same day I videotaped John in a lesson with a group of thirty 7<sup>th</sup> year students. This extract contains the introduction and some activities of this lesson, focussed on improvisation within a 12 bar blues structure. All students play tuned percussion instruments following the explanations of the teacher, who plays the piano.*

Oscar: This was the third one. Could you try to describe what you were doing in this part of the lesson?

John: Yes. Emmh...I think I need to look at the final aim of the lesson before, just to explain that. The final aim was for them to improvise over twelve bars with a blue scale. So that exercise there, were just to introducing them to the concept of the different rhythms, a blue scale – you know, the first three notes an E, D and G – and to get them to lose their inhibitions, to feel them that whatever they do within those notes, if they play anything, nothing is wrong, you know, is going to sound right; to use their ears, to listen to what they are actually playing and to make a good sound... and to give them confidence in their ability, because they completely go wrong if that is not worked carefully. In my demonstrations I play a bar, I give them some ideas... you know, they start as a calling and call, so I play some and they repeated exactly the same, and they don't realise but I am giving them ideas

for their final improvisation. I think all of that was a call and a call, I played some and they repeated it, testing all of them on pitch discrimination... pitch and rhythm...

Oscar: ...Like a building exercise to improvise, but do you think they are improvising in there, in this last excerpt?... John: No, not at all, no. They just copy, aren't they, using their aural skills and copying. So, there is no creativity at all really...

Oscar: Let us watch the next excerpt, it is the continuation of this...

John: Ok.

*Videotaped excerpt 4 description: The same lesson with the same group of thirty 7<sup>th</sup> year students. After group and individual exercises of 'call and response', the teacher ask what is the meaning of 'improvising'. One student's answer is: 'to make it up'. The teacher, following the pupil's answer, explains how to do it and introduces some more music exercises. They play the same blues giving each student 12 bars for improvising and the whole group plays the section B of the blues after each improvisation.*

Oscar: We watched the end of the lesson, this time with improvisation with children. What is your immediate response to this extract?

John: In terms of their assignment?...

Oscar: Yes...how do you perceive yourself and your pupils?

John: I think during the lesson there's a clear progression between what they started with, you know, the simple blues tune to get them in the mood, the call and the core, call and response, and then leading up to those twelve bars improvisations. I think most of them were quite musical. They were taking on ideas we used at the start of the lesson, both melodic and rhythmic, and they were quite musical responses...creative musical responses, while working within this quite tight structure.

Oscar: I have seen a blond girl at the back, and Simon... They look like they have musical abilities beyond the other pupils. Do you think creativity, in these kind of activities, is linked with the other musical abilities? Do you see some of your pupils better than the others?

John: Em...it is very difficult, because I think with the blues there isn't a right and wrong but in the same way compositions or improvisations sounds right and wrong. You know, you can play a couple of notes and it'll sound right. But some of the rhythms they were playing were really complex and I think with this improvising is quite differentiated by outcome, isn't it, whatever they are doing and their mark will be. We are providing a framework for them to improvise and again it is not the most creative thing in the world because they have got a clear structure, they can only play certain things, and you know, they have got twelve bars to improvise, they are restricted from the resources because they have got five notes in front of them to work with, and so it is not what I term free sort of composition and, you know, free creativity. I think those two probably were restricted from the resources they had. Perhaps they wanted to be larger or to be more musical with two beaters.

Oscar: Some of them were, I think, quite good, musical. Did you do these exercises before with the same pupils?

John: No. No they haven't done anything like that before. It just shows you how they can go and noticed, you know, I would not have a clue they could improvise that well and pick things up so easily, you know, unless you can monitor that.

Oscar: Good. Let's watch the second last one.

*Videotaped excerpt 5 description: The end of the same lesson with 7<sup>th</sup> year pupils. After the improvisation exercises the teacher comment on particular pupils' improvisations. The lesson finishes and then the students put their instruments back to their boxes and tidy-up the classroom.*

Oscar: The same lesson. You comment on pupils' improvisations and that was the end of the lesson. Would you try to describe what you were doing at the end?

John: I think to make them aware of what they'd done, to evaluate what they'd actually performed and, you know, unless they can put it into words it is quite difficult, isn't it. That was probably the aim, to make them aware of what they'd actually achieved during the lesson, because it's quite considerable their achievements during the lesson. And also the OFSTED can... [I change my face to one of inquiring surprise, and John tries to clarify the term] ...which is, you know who were and OFSTED inspection, because often the schools are inspected. It is clearly stated: 'state the aims at the beginning and at the end of each lesson'. And then the pupils will go with the right thinking. You know, what they have achieved. It's quite important.

Oscar: Have you had OFSTED inspections this...?  
at this school.

John: Three years ago, yes,

Oscar: Were they with good output?

John: I had just started actually at the school, and it was an ideal opportunity for me to use OFSTED as a way of getting resources and what I wanted for the department. So I used it as a positive experience.

Oscar: Do you think you have a well-resourced music department in your school?

John: Em... you are never really satisfied, are you, with what you have got, there is always something that you haven't got. But I think...yes, there is a good range of tuned, untuned percussion, keyboards with multi-tracks facilities and yes, I think it is good, but it could be better.

Oscar: Right. Well, let's watch the last one. It is quite short.

*Videotaped excerpt 6 description: the same classroom now empty. In this excerpt I focus on the materials hang on the wall, in particular on several graphic scores made by 7<sup>th</sup> year pupils.*

Oscar: I taped some scores that were on the wall made by pupils. Would you describe the project in which these scores were produced? More or less, did your pupils write these scores this year, or...

John: It's actually those pupils who were involved in that lesson, wrote those graphic scores at the start of year seven. So, they were experimenting with sound and, in a basic level, you know, they tried to notate it with a form of notation through graphic scores rather than normal notation.

Oscar: How long was the project?

John: We started with a group graphic score, you know all playing full parts, as a whole class and we got to a graphic score of Beethoven's fifth Symphony. Then we tried to compose our own graphic scores in groups, they all have to write one, then it went to the groups and performed in front of the class.

Oscar: Did you choose the best ones for the wall?

John: Not necessarily, no. A mixture. Perhaps pupils that I wanted to motivate. There are some good ones up there but a mixture of best and bits. Obviously if you put it into a display it needs to be quite of a good standard.

Oscar: Good. Well, that is it. Thanks very much for... John: Do you want me to do anything else, or...? Oscar: Just some short questions out of tape.

[I stopped the tape recorder and asked some further questions about his studies at the university, age, teaching experience and his music experiences playing and conducting in groups and ensembles]

## SECOND PILOT.

**Interview date: 14-11-2000 (13:15). Location: teacher's school, music computer room.**

*Videotaped excerpt 1 description: 7th year students. Rhythm from Ghana (composition project). Rhythm practice and explanations.*

Oscar: Did you recognise the teacher in film?

Mary: I did indeed, yes [Laugh]. Goodness me.

Oscar: Could you explain me how does this composition project work?

Mary: Right, the idea is that first of all they experience a little bit of African music looking in particular at the rhythm, the complication of the rhythm and the cycle of rhythms. That was the aim at the beginning of the project, so at the moment they are not composing, they are just learning those rhythms. So, once they perform them, next week, they go to compose their own rhythms, perhaps using the *paa-pa-ti-pa-pa* but they may change it into another rhythm, so they may go *paa-paa-paa-ti-ti-ti-pa-pa* or anything they want. Now they have got the kind of format and how to do it, so I am going to give them... by learning the 'Agbadza' rhythm they have got their own kind of basic and then, they are going to change it how they want so they would do a *paa-pa-ti-pa-pa* rhythm of their own, make it up as long as it fits to twelve and so they would compose their own music, but using what we have done over the last few weeks, as a kind of guidance.

Oscar: How long is the project?

Mary: Right the project, it will be six weeks, because next week they are actually going to perform the one that have been learning and then they will have a couple more weeks to work on their own and then they will perform their own and we are going to borrow drums from another school to let them use drums because obviously the instruments we have got

are just... I mean, they are not proper instruments and we need to do it properly. It will be really nice for them to use the proper African drums which we do not have.

Oscar: Are they going to play in front of the rest of the class?

Mary: They will play in front of the rest of the class and I will tape them, or video them. It depends if I can get the video, if I can hire the school video. I either tape or record them in a video.

Oscar: Would you try to describe your role as a teacher with the pupils and their compositions?

Mary: Well, I feel like I guide them and give them a framework, rather than just say 'Right go away and compose any rhythm you want', so I think I have been fairly strict with my guidance with them. I feel I give them a framework and ideas to work with them and they can go off on their own and develop those. There are certain restrictions obviously, but I feel that at this stage they need to have a framework to work on, otherwise the composition can... they can spend so much time kind of discussing what they are going to do that in fact they don't get very much done, whereas now they have got a framework to work with.

Oscar: This class I taped, was it the second or third?

Mary: It was the second class err... second class, yes.

Oscar: OK. I would like to ask you about the attainments of the National Curriculum...[I was losing some time looking for a sheet with a quotation from the attainment levels for Key Stage 3]... sorry about this...

Mary: Do you want to get my lesson plan with my National Curriculum targets?

Oscar: A...yes, please. I stop this for a while.

Mary: OK [she went next room to bring her lesson plan, and I stopped the tape recorder for half a minute]

Oscar: This question is about your opinion about the specifications in the National Curriculum. Do you like the specifications on composition and creativity?

Mary: Yes. I think the National Curriculum targets are sufficient to give a teacher opportunity to develop them, they way they want to develop them. So, I think it is not too prescriptive. So, they give out what they targets are and you have to fulfil them in the way that you want. I quite like that element of freedom, so I can plan my lessons around them. So my lessons, the way I fulfil these targets may be different to another teacher but I think senior specialist music people have so many different strands, you know, and specialities. I think it is nice to be able to encounter em... work towards the National Curriculum targets in the way that you want to do it, which is not to kind of 'boxed', you are not told exactly what to do all the time which is nice.

Oscar: Do you feel confident with these kinds of activities?

Mary: No, I don't, this is all new to me. The units on the music of Africa are totally new, so I did not feel very confident about at the beginning because I am from a very kind of conservative background. My all music education was classical, so any new any world music I looked at I had to spend a long time learning it myself, so I spend half term researching all

of this and planing the lessons and getting recordings of it all. So, I am getting into it more now, but the first week I found the lessons quite difficult, specially with all these rhythms, with the twelve bits and the cycle with the rhythms because it is not sort of like classical music which is in 4/4. I didn't feel very confident but I gradually feel better now.

Oscar: How would you define creativity? They use some times in the National Curriculum 'composition', 'improvisation'...

Mary: Well, at the moment, they are really... they are listening and learning and playing those rhythms that I have given them, but eventually they would be exploring and developing those rhythms. So, that is why I have got my National Curriculum target [she pointed at the top of the sheet of her lesson plan] is: 'Improvise, exploring and developing musical ideas when performing'. So, I have given them the ideas and they are going to develop them. And also, particularly this one 'experience range of modes and recorded music from different times and cultures. They are not used to perhaps hearing this kind of music, so I wanted to get that in context.

Oscar: So, do you think it is possible to teach to be creative?

Mary: Do I think it is possible to...?

Oscar: ...to teach the pupils to be creative?

Mary: To be creative?...I think you can help them. I do not know whether, I mean some children are naturally more creative, but I think you give them something to work with, then... yes, you can teach them to be creative, if you guide them in the right direction. And some are obviously going to be more creative than others.

Oscar: In this composition project, do you consider any specific classroom setting to work with?

Mary: I knew I wanted to be in a circle because I wanted them to be able to be part of it, and everyone to be able to see me. Although the room is quite small, so it is quite hard to get in a proper circle, so there is always pupils on my left that I can't always see so well, rather than having them sitting in front of me. I want to just to feel more kind of together, so I knew that I wanted it like that, and also knew that they would need to work by themselves, so I knew that I would need to split them into groups. I split them into five rooms just because practicalities of rooms. We've only got two rooms upstairs, this room here, plus one other and then the classroom; so that was really dictated by what rooms we've got here. But I knew I wanted them in a circle.

Oscar: Sorry about the many questions...[Laugh]

Mary: It's all right...

Oscar: Does the physical environment influence pupils' outcomes?

Mary: The physical environment, em...

Oscar: Yes...

Mary: Sometimes. I mean, if for example, some of the rooms are busy and there are children that have to work in corridors and there are people coming and going, I don't think they can concentrate as well, and then I think they lose focus. So, yes I think that influences them, and

I also think that if they had the proper instruments, I think they would perhaps find that more interesting if they were actually using proper instruments, whereas some of our percussion instruments now are getting quite old, so I think that would generate more enthusiasm and especially if they had the African drums, because obviously they find those good fun, so I think sometimes you help that, sometimes just by practicalities of not having what you want all the time. But I think mainly we get round about that.

Oscar: Right. This is a personal question... Would you describe yourself as creative?

Mary: Em...not terribly no. Again, I'd never did composition at college. I also when I was a child, when I had my piano lessons it was always 'you have to read the music', I was discouraged from playing by ear and that sort of thing, so consequently composition and improvising frighten me a little bit because I am not use to doing it. So I always... And also it's time as well. I'd really like to say 'start getting into jazz piano and that sort of thing' but I just find you need quite a lot of time to work on, and I am so busy. And it is much easier someone just give me a piece of music and I can sight read it, so it's kind of I am lazy in that. I know if I am getting the music then I can play it, whereas if I don't have the music there, that is very difficult for me and it would take me quite a lot of time to work it, and unfortunately I just don't have time, so... I wouldn't say creative; I am not hugely creative, no.

Oscar: OK. Let's watch the next excerpt...

Mary: OK

*Videotaped excerpt 2 description: The same Project with the same pupils.*

Oscar: We've watched the second extract. Would you try to describe what you were doing in this excerpt?

Mary: Basically I am just deciding, selecting the groups at random. I don't particularly want children to work with necessarily the people that they are going to play within the playground because I get disrupted by that, so I choose, that is why I number the children so they are not necessarily gonna be in the same group with their best mate and therefore get disrupted and mock about. So, all I do is number them and then say 'ones stand up', but I wanted to separated those 5 children that were particularly good at picking up that rhythm, so they could a kind of give a sense of direction for the group, and would least know there were five strong individuals in each those groups, and then basically just send them off to rooms to do their work, that's it really.

Oscar: Right. Are some pupils better than others?

Mary: Well, I don't know the class...obviously because they are first year, I've only had them... [She stopped to think]... I had them before half term, obviously there are six lessons, and so this would be about their seventh or eighth lesson. So I only see them once a week because I am teaching so many first... I have four classes of that age and then, four classes of the next age and then about six of the next age, so I have so many children passing through me every week, it is very difficult to me to get to know them well so, I could only tell by watching them while we were in the circle and they were doing the *paa-pa-ti-pa-pa* rhythm, I could then research certain children who pick it up really quickly so that's all I have to go on, in that instance.

Oscar: In general, would you say that there are some children more creative than others?

Mary: Yes, I would say so, yes. I mean obviously you don't know, some of those children may have had instrumental lessons, they may too have had private lessons at home, so they may have had more tuition, but I don't know that. But on the other hand it may not necessarily be the case, they may just have a good sense of rhythm and that is that. I know there is one child that I choose that has actually got special needs, he is e... I can not remember exactly what is wrong... it may be dyslexic or something like that... I noticed that he picked it up really quickly, but also I felt that it would boost his confidence being pointed out as being good because I know he is failing in other areas, so I thought that would give him a bit of 'a boost'. He wasn't brilliant, but he was good, but I thought it would be quite nice for him, to feel nice about that, so there is a kind of... a couple of reasons behind choosing them. Either they are really good, or in that case, that child was good but I felt it would be nice for him to be... to boost his confidence because they obviously feel special if they feel they are doing it well, makes them feel nice sometimes. That's the idea.

Oscar: O.K.... How long have you been teaching?

Mary: Em...this is the beginning of my fourth year. The first year and a half I was only part time. I used to teach piano at home, so this is my sort of second year full time.

Oscar: In those four years, thinking about your best pupils or your good ones, how would you describe them? If you can describe some general...

Mary: Right. My best pupils...well. Now I've got a very nice year 10 group, they are all doing GCSC. So I had them right from the beginning and they were my babies in year 7, and so now I've got about eighteen of them doing GCSC music and they are a lovely group. But they are all very different to me. Some of them are very good performers, some of them are good at composing, some of them are not particularly musical but they just have... they like...there is a nice atmosphere in the Music Department, they like to be involved in choirs and be part of a group, so it is not always necessarily the most talented children that start GCSC. There is a real mixed bunch, and they are all there for different reasons. Some of them are very musical, some are not particularly musical but they just enjoy being...they like the camaraderie in the music or being part of a group. Specially children may be that may not be particularly happy in their class, in all the subjects if you see what I mean, and they find a nice sort of sense of camaraderie in the Music Department, working as part of bands or something like that. So, my best pupils are not necessarily ones that are the most brilliant performers or the most brilliant...you know what I mean?

Oscar: Yeah...and they are not the same...?

Mary: And they are not the same, and there are always different levels and, you know, some of the nicest children, the ones that just enjoy it, they get involved, they work as part of a team, and they have a real sense of enjoyment being part of a group so, we make less stress on how good they are or great performers they are. Although, you know, obviously it's nice to have lots of children doing really well and composing fantastic stuff too.

Oscar: Would you say these GCSC pupils are more motivated than others are?

Mary: This year seventh?

Oscar: Not this, a...

Mary: My year ten...

Oscar: Yes.

Mary: Well, certainly, if they chose to do GCSC in music is because they want to do it, so of course they are more motivated. But the boys that I have got were always motivated, really like from the beginning, so they are all from different classes. So, now I have got a bunch of



all of... instead of having may be three boys in one class that are particularly motivated I've now got them all together in one class, so... But right from the beginning they always got more involved and they enjoyed it, so they probably had a natural...something inside them right from the beginning. I don't think it was particularly anything I did, they obviously had a love of music right from the beginning. This...[unintelligible] and now they are doing GCSC.

Oscar: Good... Let's watch the third one.

Mary: OK

*Videotaped excerpt 3 description: Group work alone and with the teachers' help.*

Oscar: Would you try to describe again your role as a teacher, here? Were you guiding, increasing pupils confidence, or...?

Mary: Well, I was reinforcing what we did in the lesson, because when I was watching it, as you saw, they're working on their own, they didn't really know what to do, didn't know how to go about to, so I felt like I was kind of teaching it again to them almost, guiding them through it again, because they did not have a clue of what they were doing. So, yes I think I was kind of guiding them through all again, because they weren't really sure what to do.

Oscar: This was a short excerpt. We could watch the last one...

Mary: OK

*Videotaped excerpt 4 description: All students back in the main room. Questions and explanations. Finishing with some homework.*

Oscar: Again, would you try to describe what were you doing in this part of the class?

Mary: I was trying to get them to think about things they found tricky when they were doing it, and the ones that had sorted it out and were doing it well could may be then tell the class what helped them. So I wanted them to get...I wanted to instil in them how important it is that they need to keep in time together and that they need to watch the person who is counting, and I wanted them rather than me tell them I wanted them to answer me and tell me and then therefore feed it back to the whole of the class. And also there is this problem with some of the children not concentrating so I just needed to reinforce at the beginning of the lesson how are they going to work in rooms without me because obviously I can only be in one place at one time. I am trusting them and they have to make sure they behave, otherwise I can't leave them by themselves.

Oscar: I think it works... Mary: Sorry?

Oscar: I think it works, with the

pupils in the main room when you are upstairs.

Mary: They were OK? Oscar: Yes. [Laugh] Mary: We don't know, you see? We don't know. I mean partly also they know they are on video, so that would influence them, because they know they are being videoed. You don't always know what is going on when you are not in the room and you have to hope and trust that they are working and hopefully if they can understand the task and they know what to do, what I try to make sure is when I set the task and send them up to rooms, I run around perhaps and check that everyone is OK at the beginning to make sure that they are all quick started. I wouldn't leave one group by themselves for too long unless there was someone, obviously you were videoing them, so I

left them for longer because I knew you were in and they would probably, hopefully work a bit better knowing that someone is in the room with them, while I ran around to check the others were OK.

Oscar: I forgot in the last excerpt, at the end, I think you send some of them to other rooms.

Mary: Yes, I sent them to tell the other children to come downstairs, to save me having to leave the room and leave those children by themselves. I sent a couple of boys to go up to get the other children.

Oscar: Let's see if I have some more questions...because this being the pilot I trying different questions and different ways to ask... Mary: Sure, yes. Oscar: To put the questions at the start or at the end...[Laugh] At the end of the project, I think you'll finish this project before Christmas, you will evaluate the students' work.

Mary: Yes, I will evaluate it and they will also, I will ask them to write me an evaluation of their works, so what they were ask to do, how they did it, what problems they had, how the performance went, so I get them to write a self-evaluation of their own work.

Oscar: With the pupils' compositions, how do you evaluate 'good' and 'bad'?

Mary: Well, it is very difficult to say what is good and what is bad. This project is a little more restricted because they are going to be...they are being ask specifically to try to make up their own rhythms 'in the style off', so I would be obviously looking for the basics like 'have they got a twelve bit pattern?', so it is easier to asses in a way, is going to be basically: 'do they play in time together?', 'do they've got a counter?'...So the composition is going to be easier to asses and then once we are using drums and things like that if we got children improvising, then it will be interesting to see how they get on doing that. But it is always very difficult to assess composition, specially when is part of a group as well, it is difficult to assess it.

Oscar: When you assess creativeness or creativity, do you assess it comparing pupils between them or...how do you manage?

Mary: Well...inevitably you draw comparisons, don't you? But I wouldn't necessarily, although I may think that one group is particularly inventive with their rhythms and they're very together and they keep in time, I may give them a high grade or whatever but I wouldn't necessarily tell them what their grade was. In comparison to someone else if one group was much weaker, I would try to always think of something positive to say about each group. So, say that one group wasn't very imaginative, but they had kept in time I would focus on how good it was because they were all together and they kept in time with each other, so I would try to think about something positive to say to each group, but then say: 'But look at this group here, it wasn't it good because this gentleman was improvising on the drums and he had lots of different rhythms and which were really interesting'. So, I would try and think something positive to say even about the weakest groups, and then point out what other groups were doing that were good to give the other children think 'oh well, may be I could do that next time'. So to try and give them ideas. I wouldn't necessarily say well yours is 'bad' or yours is 'good', your are an 'A' or you are a 'B', because that would be...I think that wouldn't be constructive, it would create problems, it would cut them off, to be honest, I think they would loose the enjoyment of it, I think.

Oscar: What would be your definition of creativity?

Mary: ... [Thinking] Something that's being thought about which is imaginative...a child who is quite keen about what they have been asked to do and they try their best to find, in this case, the rhythm that's interesting, and not just may be one bit repeating all the way through. In this instance I would think if they could find something which was a mixture of bits rather than just say crochets, I would think that would be more creative than someone that's just clapping one bit, in this instance. But my definition of creativity...oh it's difficult... [Thinking]

Oscar: It's a working definition of ... Mary: That would be mine, yes. Oscar:...creativity.

Mary: But this is like GCSE pupils they are to composing songs, so... the ones I've given guidelines, they have been taught about chords and the relationship of chord I, IV and V. And the children that have just used chord I, IV and V and they've not been able to develop any more. In comparison other children added 7ths, they have added different chords, they've changed it into the minor. I would consider that to be more creative than the children that just stocked to using the basic chords. It's something more than they are adding to it... that's not really come from me but come from their own ideas.

Oscar: With these older pupils you teach them composition, do the students follow some process...?

Mary: Well, GCSEs are expected to produce two compositions by the end of the two years. So, I give them projects in the first year and they might produce six compositions with different inspiration for each of the six projects and then, in the second year they would choose which they felt were the best. They would chose two and they would improve them, change them, add to them, and then they would finally submit them as part of their... that would be a third of their GCSE, their composition...

Oscar: ...at the end of the second year?

Mary: At the end of the second year. So, I try to give them experiences of different kinds of ways of composing. I started up with song writing because it is very well structured, because you have got verse, chorus, bridge and you have basic chords, so to begin with I thought I would be fairly strict with them and giving them quite strict guidelines and then I would move one and let them expand and be more imaginative later one. So I may be, I've widened the boundaries, if you see what I mean. I figure through the year I'll give them more freedom, to express themselves more.

Oscar: Do they work in here, I mean, do they compose in the school or they take their work home?

Mary: They mainly work in the school, because now we have got Cubase, it's a sequencing programme, which is great for the children that don't play instruments because it means they can play in one line at a time and build the top row without having to play at the same time so, because the software is really expensive they usually work at lunch time, and they stay behind the office, I mean they are here until six o'clock at night quite often working on their compositions. Some of the children will continue if they are perhaps doing something on the guitar or don't want to use the computer, they'll obviously perhaps at home too. There are some boys that have composed may be six or seven songs as a hobby outside the school and then now say all 'miss', you know, 'which tune which be the best one to submit for my GCSE?', so they might do that on their own, back at home.

Oscar: How many computers do you have?

Mary: We have got about eight, so they have half an hour on and then they have to swap because there are eighteen of them.

Oscar: Do they work in couples?

Mary: No, they work by themselves.

Oscar: OK. Interesting. That's everything that I wanted to ask, because more or less the questions about your studies are here [I pointed to a piece of paper completed by the teacher].

Mary: Right, OK. Is there anything you want to ask me about that if you can't read my writing?...[Laugh]

Oscar: Did you study for piano, you said?

Mary: I was originally...I went to I was at Royal Holloway University of London, and I specialised from singing because I was a singer, and my mum was a singer so she inspired me. I was massively involved in music when I was at school singing in choirs, everything, playing the piano, and that came from her. And I used to go and see her performing at the Coliseum...it's brilliant. So I did my degree in music and then I wanted to work, I wanted to get a performance, to continue my singing after university and teach at home, so did that for about three years, but then... [An alarm for the change of lesson went on quite noisily] ... I basically...my husband and I decided to get married, we wanted a mortgage so I thought I need to earn more money, so to be honest I felt into teaching really because I'd done my PGCE, thinking 'Em...I don't really know whether I really want to teach classrooms' because I know that is quite demanding, it is different teaching one child at the piano, than teaching thirty two of them, so didn't really know how it would work out. But I really enjoyed it, so I decided... so 'that was that!'. So it just kind of happened by chance in a way. I didn't think, when I was twenty two, I thought...I didn't think 'I want to be a classroom teacher', that was...I thought 'I definitely I don't want to teach!'. So it is quite funny really.

Oscar: Do you enjoy it now?

Mary: I do enjoy it, yes. Most of the time it is very time consuming and it's very tiring. So, that is the only thing. It is very, the hours...[during the answering of this last question the tape got to the end. I did not change its side because as the bell rang a few minutes before, we were well out of time]

### THIRD PILOT

**Interview Date: 27-11-2000 (13:50). Location: teacher's school, video room.**

*Video excerpt 1 description: Composition task 1 with 8th year students. Rhythm practice and explanations by Eva.*

Oscar: Could you tell me how does this unit work? What was your plan, because this is a...

Eva: This is a middle section isn't it? Oscar: Yeah, I think this was the second lesson, or...?

Eva: No. They have done two...three to performance tasks, they had three lessons previously, just looking at examples of good melodies, and they'd learned to play those and they'd learned to say what was what made up a good melody or what features, you know.

We were looking at melodic writing and melodic shape, and this was just the introduction to the final task, terminal task, which was where they made up their own melody which had an eight bar structure and they went free, they weren't restricted about rhythms. So it's in the middle of the project and it is just to get them thinking about melodic shape and begin to get them to think about melodic structure. I gave some hints to that actually explaining...we structured A B A B actually sort of in the examples I gave, I wanted them to be cut from things that I always play...sort of using, you know, a structure. So, it's in the middle, they had examples of good melodies and then they now have started to compose. They had experiences of composing melodies before, but this is specific melody writing. It is not my schema of work; it's my head of department schema of work, so I didn't devise this...

Oscar: OK. Do you follow some process to teach composition?

Eva: In general, within a...? Oscar: In general. Eva: Yeah. Well, I tend to approach it in a similar way, although we did things of different sorts because they get used to work in a particular way and they feel more...the thing about writing music is they have to feel...they have to feel some safe, they have to feel confident, otherwise they 'panic', they wouldn't be able to do it. So, I do tend to follow, I tend to go from...to the really basic from a structural point of view: group of notes that they are using and the structural point of view really, within the sort of style that we are writing, 'Irish gigs' or 'ragtime' ... staff like that. So I try to get them to think about structural things and most importantly choices.

Oscar: Let's watch the next one... Eva: OK

***Excerpt 2 Same students. Two groups of pupils working in their compositions. Eva helps a third group.***

Oscar: This is about the students' composing and your role. First of all, would you say the students follow some process when composing?

Eva: Well yes. I mean I was trying to say, I mean that is what, anyway we are teaching them to follow to start of five, the group of notes they'd made a choice, so I give them a choice, that is the first bit. Then they need to think about the structure, you could say they weren't thinking about structure, you could say 'well maybe the melody was quite phrased' to encourage them to think about phrasing...so I think it is from that they do their own, that it is what I am trying to teach them, because I'd say they obviously work in a structure, they can then work structurally, invoke...you know, do different things. But, I mean, it was a very prescribed task, so there was actually quite limited...to what they could do, they were just putting in the notes to the rhythm. It's like a puzzle really, that bit.

Oscar: Would you try to describe your role as a teacher with the pupils and their compositions?

Eva: Yeah, it really depends on the ability of the students. I mean with the really most able all you are doing is guiding them and saying 'well you could do this', providing alternatives, improvising ways for them to develop music. With the less able, the students that find it very very difficult, I may have to start them off by actually giving them a melody, you know. It depends on the sort of ability and experience of the students really. I prefer to guide them, I prefer to let them put the music in...well that again, that is very prescribed so you don't really...[unintelligible] in that aspect but, give them a piece of music, you know, guide them with their own ideas, let them get their own ideas and have them develop those ideas. Obviously what I'm aiming for anyway.

Oscar: Could be watch the next one? Eva: Yeah.

***Excerpt 3: Three examples of composition task 1 by several students.***

Oscar: What is your definition of creativity?

Eva: Ouch!!...[Laugh] You can't ask questions like that, that's terrible! I don't know...creativity... 'Expression' or... I don't know...what they intended doing to create something, making something up I suppose, basic level, so it depends. Enabling my role in terms of creativity is enabling students to develop their creative skills so they can express what they want to, they can write the type of music that they want to more successfully and they can find ways of, you know, expressing themselves through music. I don't know...that's it really. I mean it is getting them have to make up things, really.

Oscar: Do you think it is possible to teach to be creative?

Eva: Well, I think all human beings have all creativity in some aspects, whether it's in making songs or...all I am doing it's I am giving them the tools to be able to be creative, to show their creativity, to develop working in, you know, to create work. So, that's what I am doing really as a teacher. I don't think you can teach creativity as such, because it is not something that is solid and firm, it's an expression, I suppose. You can teach them, I don't know...you can teach them how to create something, you can teach them how to create music but you can't teach them creativity itself, you know, because they all responding in unique ways and creativity is abstract, nothing, definite things... Oscar: The TV went off again!

[At this point the TV went dead and we stopped the interview and called a technician. In the meantime the technician was fixing it up, we spoke off the record about the students on the videotape. After the unexpected delay we watched the next extract, talking meanwhile we were watching it, and I forgot to switch on the tape recorder...].

***Excerpt 4: Description of composition task 2 by Eva. Elisa's example and Eva's overall evaluation of the task.***

Eva: [Ending the phrase] ... I mean it is quite unusual, she actually went for the harmony of the...[unintelligible] major seventh.

Oscar: You just said off the tape that mm...that student...  
Oscar:...was one of the best.

Eva: Yes, Sofia.

Eva: Yes, she is one of my favourite students too, academically. But the other one who was playing two hands, Nicole Brown, isn't but she still achieves things.

Oscar: Would you try to describe some characteristics of your best pupils?

Eva: What, in terms of composition?

Oscar: I mean in terms of how they work?

Eva: A, how they work, yes. It is the focus. They understand the concepts, quite, more, a bit...It doesn't follow that the academically able they'll be able in music. I mean musically able students they'll, they are...they write music in a style that is their own, they don't copy necessarily what I have done, then their style of music if we are doing something which is kind of a free composition in the end, because they are going to produce a tune in their own style, then they will produce an interesting and original type of melody. I mean Sofia, the

final melody from Sofia will sound very much like, you know, Bartok, that sort of very...it had that kind of edge to it, sort of, I don't know, 'Lydian' mode, edge to it. So that's really if they can take what I have given them, and developing and copying in an original and interesting way, OK? They may do that through the melody itself, which is what Sofie did, or they might do it by having a melody that has three parts, so you've got a counter melody, plus an accompaniment. You know, they can either develop it melodically or they can develop it harmonically.

[At this point I was conscious of the time lost fixing up the TV. Eva had told me that we could avoid watching the video and go to the questions because she could remember the music lesson by reading the written description provided, so I did].

Oscar: I'll skip the next extract and ask you a question directly.

Eva: OK

Oscar: Does the physical environment influence pupils' outcomes?

Eva: O entirely, yes. Yes.

Oscar: Do you consider a specific classroom setting to teach composition?

Eva: Yes. I have to have those keyboards facing the wall, because that is where the plugs are. It is not, I would prefer, it is more friendly facing in, but it is not really possible. I teach in another classroom, with this class I teach in another classroom as well, because I have them twice a week, and it's in a much smaller classroom and everything it's much more cramped together and I don't get nearly as good work in that classroom even with the same classes, they don't work as well as that in a nice environment as if in my classroom because you've got the physical space, nothing it's in caution, so you actually, you know, have room. The keyboards are set up right that with the headphones, they do produce better work and they focus more with headphones. But I do try to get them to play to...I do try and get them to face the hall every lesson and keep a welfare where each of them work in front of the whole class. But the other thing is creating an atmosphere where they feel secure, and they can feel happy about performing in front of their peers, because they feel their work is going to be respected. I think that's probably the most major factor of a secure environment.

Oscar: Would you describe yourself as creative?

Eva: Well, yes. But I think that I am a creative teacher as opposed to a creative musician. I think I find ways of ...Is finding ways of communicating. I think. You know, getting them to understand and it's also being able to differentiate, being able to adjust your tasks for the pupils, you know, individual pupils. If I compose, you can hear my composition is very primitive, I can write pieces of music like other people, I can do it, I can copy other people's styles but I am not very original in my composition.

Oscar: Did you have a specific training on composition and improvisation in your studies?

Eva: I was never good at improvisation, I'm much better now. In my degree we did composition but I don't use any of those, it's too complex, then I didn't think it was any good. I didn't do composition at school. So I did a little bit in my teacher training and the rest is just... I don't know, I learned here, I learned teaching here. And nothing is more relevant than my school experience.

Oscar: What are your music studies?

Eva: I studied, I did a music degree at Cardiff University and I did voice, I majored in voice, but I am a violinist, OK?...hang on a bit...So, that is it really. And I've got the post. I have got core training, I've got a basic diploma in Kodaly choir methods [unintelligible] university of...but I didn't get there, I did it in London but it's [unintelligible] Liszt Institute, in Hungary. And the rest of the experience, I have done lots of orchestral playing and I have done gamelan, I play the gamelan...so, I have got quite a wide experience. I played quite a lot of styles of music. So, it's a violin experience, choirs, stuff like that. I would say my experience is very broad, in music I've got quite a wide experience.

Oscar: When you work with this kind of activities how do you motivate your pupils?

Eva: Well, they trust me, they trust me to give them work they are going to enjoy. They are motivated when they achieve, when they think they are achieving well, and they are motivated when their music is successful and when they like their music. So, they need to have the skills to be able to produce their music, which is what I am doing. They get a sense of satisfaction and it is the satisfaction that motivates them. And I am quite humorous, if people have been unmotivated then I tend to sort of join them along really. And it's at being horrible or 'noty' then I deal with that in distinct way but I do tend to try in quite positive attitude in my classroom. Because you can't do, you can't teach music if you are forcing them into write music, you can't do it like that, you have to, you know, you have to motivate them, you have to be energetic and happy and humorous and smiling and make them feel good about themselves, because if they feel confident then they will be able to do it. If they don't feel confident you can't get to it. It's important to make them feel worthwhile.

Oscar: How do you evaluate creativeness in a pupil's work?

Eva: Oh, it's awful! It's so subjective; it's the bit I hate the most. Because you'll get this piece is a really good example because you have got these melodies and some of them kids just said to each other 'that piece is just like your personality', it's just like, you know, 'just reflects your personality'...two people have said that. Yet, the melodic structure isn't so sophisticated but the class thinks the piece is great, so I've thought to give it a slightly slower mark because of the melodic structure. I have got other pieces that people want to learn, you know, they would say 'oh teach me your tune, teach me your tune!', they've copied styles, I've got other pieces of classes listening to a recording of a piece, it's much useful listening to a recording of one of the pieces that one of the two girls have made up and they are harming because it's a really lovely tune, yet I can only give it seven out of ten! So, we have to go through descriptions, it is the only way, and it's too subjective, and it's horrible! And it's getting worst when we've got to give people National Curriculum levels on creativity and I don't possibly say, I can't possibly say how it is...it's just impossible. I mean, you can use one spirally thing but it's...that only means things to musicians, it does not necessarily mean people things to, you know, non-musicians who don't understand that musical development. I mean that is the basis I think, how we all can [unintelligible]... it's impossible, I hate it, it's the worst bit I have in the job is having to give a group that stands a great fantastic piece of music and I've got to give them, I've got to give them seven out of ten. As opposed to ten out of ten, which is what I believe they should get, especially when they worked really hard as well.

Oscar: Talking about the National Curriculum, do you know the specifications on creativity in the levels, more or less?

Eva: In the eight levels, no. We are doing it now. We are just doing the performance levels, but it is again so subjective, it's more or less anything you wanted to be, so that is going to be developed, we are discussing that stuff at the moment. Because we've got to start this



year. It will be description based and it will fairly much be what we are using at the moment. We have based it loosely on the National Curriculum levels, but it will be description based. But then how do we know what we are doing it sounds another score, you know, how do we know what the level is? We have got no examples; it's impossible to say, so...

Oscar: Do you feel confident with this kind of activities?

Eva: Yes. It's mainly composition, I teach mainly composition. I am quite happy with the students who they are very happy in reproducing. The difference to these compositions that I've teaching them to the final compositions is quite marked. The final compositions are much, much more original, and they will feel quite secure about making up their own melodies, after having done these two, which is very, you know, quite...[unintelligible]. They like the work to be structured, they work much better if you give them a structure to work with, and series of small task rather than a longer task. They are much happier with that.

Oscar: Have we got time to watch the...?

Eva: No, I think we got to go. I can remember this, and then...

Oscar: At the end I have put an extract with three, I thought good final compositions from the second.

Eva: Right.

Oscar: These three. [Pointing at the

written descriptions of the video extracts]

Eva: We've got one minute.

Oscar: Are some of your pupils more creative than others?

Eva: Some pupils do more original work, and some pupils do work that is derivative of mine...just derivative of everything else, so. I've got some, yes... [Looking at the written descriptions of the extracts:

*Excerpt 9: 26:13-28:35 More examples of work by Elisa and Nicola,  
28:35-29:45 Group at the piano, plus comments,  
29:45-31:34 Group near the blackboard, plus comments.]*

I suppose the group at the piano, that was Hanna's' group, I've got a tape of that one, Sofia's group, Hanna's' group, the group at the piano did the Bartoky, such a...and Elisa and Nicola did that one, I've got Elisa and Nicola's upstairs on a tape. I've got Sofia's, I've got the group at the piano on my computer if you want to listen to them, and Hanna's I have got those...

[A teacher who booked the Video room for the next hour came into the room to set his video on. Meanwhile we could hear outside the voices of the students ready to come in.]

Oscar: Would you like to add anything else?

Eva: No, no.

[I decided to stop recording and we continued the conversation without tape-recorder, in the staff room of the music department, where she showed me the descriptions of the levels to assess composition they were using and the sheets explaining the composition tasks]

# APPENDIX IV

## Summary of categories

## APPENDIX IV. SUMMARY OF CATEGORIES.

A short description of each category (in **bold**) and subcategory (in *italic*), as listed in Chapter 7, Table 7.1, is included in this appendix.

### GENERAL ISSUES

- 1     **(1.1) General comments**  
General comments by teachers regarding creativity and its definition. The comments coded in this category sometimes overlap with quotations from other categories (i.e. Psychological concept; Traditional concept and Unclear definition). This is because sometimes the teachers' ideas and concepts are not presented separated from one another in their responses.
- 2     **(1.2) New concept**  
Participants' comments which relate with the psychological concept of creativity as described by Elliot (1971).
- 3     **(1.3) Traditional concept**  
Participants' comments which relate with the traditional concept of creativity as described by Elliot (1971).
- 4     **(1.4) Unclear definition**  
Teachers' unclear comments about 'creativity'. Some participants didn't explicitly explain what was for them creativity (e.g. Patrick didn't use the word very much; sometimes Laura thought a lot before giving unclear short answers, perhaps related with Elliot's new concept).
- 5     **(1.5) Teachers' own creativity**  
Teachers' perceptions of their own creativity; teachers' comments on how teaching influences their own creativity. Participants' descriptions of their backgrounds with reference to composition and improvisation.

### PUPIL THEME

- 6     **(2.1) Personal characteristics**  
Teachers' descriptions of the most creative pupils.
- 7     **(2.2) Individual learning**  
Participants' observations about the different way of learning of different pupils and the need to adapt the teaching to them.
- 8     **(2.2.1) Adaptor pupils**  
Participants' comments on pupils that have difficulties to cope with openly defined

composition activities.

- 9      *(2.2.2) Innovator pupils*  
Teachers' observations of pupils that cope easily with openly defined composition activities. Comments on pupils who dislike closely defined composition tasks. It also includes comments on some situations where these pupils helped their peers (e.g. Laura and Sarah).
- 10     **(2.3) Home background**  
Participants' observations about the influence of the family background on the pupils' musical skills and creativity.

## ENVIRONMENT THEME

- 11     **(3.1) Emotional environment**  
Teachers' general comments about the emotional environment, including the importance of having a 'nice atmosphere' and 'feeling comfortable' and not 'insecure' when playing one's own composition or improvising in front of peers.
- 12     *(3.1.1) Motivation*  
Comments on the pupils' motivation during composition and improvisation activities, including how these teachers try making them feel motivated when they are not.
- 13     *(3.1.2) School culture*  
Participants' descriptions of their school's music activities and its aims (e.g. extra curricular activities); teachers' comments about their Music Department and the department within the school.
- 14     *(3.1.3) Teachers' role*  
Observations on the teacher's role in teaching composition and improvisation. This category emerged sometimes mixed with other categories. For example Emma's observations came together with 'teacher's methods' and the 'new' concept of creativity categories.
- 15     *(3.1.4) Teaching methods*  
Participants' comments on their methods during the lessons. Again this category emerged sometimes including other categories and subcategories like 'music curriculum', 'classroom settings' and 'teacher's role'. This particular category reflects on the comments about the use of all these variables in order to support the development of the pupils' musical creativity, as well as observations on the participants' actions during the lessons videotaped.
- 16     *(3.1.5) Time requirements*  
Observations regarding the time needed by pupils to complete the composition projects properly, including the negative effects of 'lack of time' due to several factors (e.g.

preparation of concerts and compartmentalisation of the school timetable).

**17 (3.2) Physical environment**

General comments on availability of physical environment.

**18 (3.2.1) Complaints and proposals for improvement**

Includes complaints raised by teachers about staff shortages, budget cuts and lack of space.

**19 (3.2.2) Classroom settings**

Comments on classroom organisation and specific use of the physical environment (e.g. rooms, instruments, group work) during the videotaped activities.

**PROCESS THEME**

**20 (4.1) General comments**

General comments on the composition process of the pupils.

**21 (4.2) Different activities**

Participants' descriptions of the activities videotaped and comments on its aims.

**22 (4.3) Group process**

Teachers' observations of the pupils' group dynamics when using group work in composition activities. Includes descriptions of special moments when a 'happy idea' appears in this process.

**23 (4.4) Improvisation-Composition**

Participants' comments on the relation between composition and improvisation.

**24 (4.5) Structured process**

Comments about following a structured process when teaching composition and improvisation. Includes Patrick's observation of teaching improvisation following 'three stages': setting up; playing; reflecting.

**25 (4.6) Unstructured process**

Participants' comments about not following a structured way of teaching composition and improvisation. Including Patrick's observation on the shift in the level of different age groups without having explicitly taught them skills on improvisation; Emma's comments on the pupils' different ways of approaching the composition activities and different timings in reaching different stages in the composition process; and Laura's comments on her 'free composition' unit.

**PRODUCT THEME**

**26 (5.1) Assessment**

Explanations of the criteria used to assess pupils' products and what teachers were looking for in a good composition or improvisation. Includes comments on pupils self-grading and difficulties experienced by participants when marking individual and group work.

**27 (5.2) Originality**

Participants' explicit and implicit comments on originality.

**28 (5.3) Music style and conventions**

This category includes comments on the style used in the music activities during the lessons and its effects on pupils, and the issue of teaching and learning within given traditions and conventions.

## **CURRICULUM ISSUES**

**29 (6.1) Music Curriculum**

Participants' comments on their school music curriculum, its organisation and its aims; teachers' comments on possible improvements.

**30 (6.2) National Curriculum**

Teachers' comments on the National Curriculum (DfEE and QCA, 1999a). Includes descriptions of its use and some objections raised by participants.

## **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

**31 (7.1) Video reactions**

Teachers' unexpected reactions (e.g. surprise, interest) when watching their own videotaped lessons.

**32 (7.2) Teachers self-criticism**

Comments of self-criticism after watching the video extracts; for instance some participants realised they did something during their lessons they did not like and commented on it.

**33 (7.3) Research process evaluation**

Includes participants' final comments after watching their pupils on the videotaped extracts, and their observations regarding the positive experience of participating in the study.

# APPENDIX V

## Interview transcripts of the main study

Patrick (p. 340)

Emma (p. 360)

Laura (p. 377)

Helen (p. 387)

Elaine (p. 399)

Sarah (p. 409)

## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK

*Context and description of the first video extract: This extract is taken from two different lessons with Year 7 and 8 groups, both of which include a rondo improvisation. The lessons are 90 minutes long (two consecutive periods of 45 minutes). At the beginning of both lessons Patrick teaches the pupils a song. Then he explains the main activity for the day, a rondo improvisation with tuned percussion instruments. The extracts happen just before the explanation of the main activity. Patrick organises the pupils in the room, sitting in a big circle, and distributes the percussion instruments.*

**Oscar** Do you recognise the teacher on the TV?

**Patrick (1)** Yes [laugh].

**Oscar** Would you try to describe what were you doing in this part of the lesson?

**Patrick (2)** I suppose really I just wanted to physically get everything set up with the minimum amount of fuss. And...if they're sat in the right place, they've got the instruments, and they've got all the space and everything else cleared out the way, then the stage is set for what we have to do. And generally speaking if...you know, in my own teaching what I've found is that if physically things are not right, or if they are not sat properly, or things are in the way, then it would just cause disruption later on. So, it's worth spending the time at the beginning, making sure the chairs are away, they sat round, and it's reasonably clear what they are going to do. And that's the other thing...with a lot of music work can end up just a lot of noise and mayhem. Because physically there's a lot of movement. So, to keep that very sort of straight forward, and for example, the way the things I ask them to do there, sitting around and so on, that is how we always do it. And yet still every time I do have to just remind them that, although it's sort of...that's the routine. So, although they are used to working in that way, it's quite good to spend the time setting up.

**Oscar** When teaching improvisation do you consider any specific classroom setting to work?

**Patrick (3)** In what way...what do you mean?

**Oscar** Including how do you work with pupils, how do you...do you have a way of using your instruments, or...?

**Patrick (4)** Well, I suppose, the piece of work that you saw done where we were looking at melodic improvisation, and so the way that I decided to do was using the tuned percussion and to work on that as a class. So that we could hear each other's work. And I was just gonna...I was playing the ostinato backing chords, or whatever it was – I can't quite remember that – as a basis for that tune. In that setting that's how I decided to organise it, because we were looking particularly at melodic work. And I'd chosen the tuned percussion because again technical...to sort of minimise any technical limitations. So for example if we...If we do some improvising on keyboards, for example, then there is more of a technical things with co-ordination and so on, and with the hand movements on the keys. Whereas doing the untuned percussion, that problem is eliminated. Most of them are much more fluent in playing, on the percussion instruments. Also there's the advantage we do have good keyboards but you can see the notes that you are playing. And the ones that weren't going to be used were removed, so there was no point in having both of them as we were just using a pentatonic scale. So, for the Year 7 class that made it easier. And it's just a bit less daunting, instead of having the whole keyboard in front of you and just focusing on a certain amount of notes. At other times they will do improvising in small groups. So what they could've



done, as a follow up to this, for example, would be for them to go off into smaller groups. One person in the group do the backing and the others take turn to improvise, so as long as they've done it in class.

**Oscar** Does the physical environment, including availability of rooms and instruments, influence pupils' outcomes?

**Patrick (5)** Oh yes. I suppose personally, because we've got very good facilities, that creates quite a positive expectation from the start, before they do it. And also, you know, the instruments we have cost quite a lot of money, but they actually make a very good sound. So, if we had some crappy, old instruments that were falling apart or they weren't in tune or whatever, then if it doesn't sound as good, their response would also be quite, you know, 'this is not very good'. That's one thing, the quality of the instruments, but certainly the space is very important. For both of these I deliberately kept it as a class improvisation, but the follow up from that would be to send them off into smaller groups and so on. And we are very lucky here that we have the opportunities for whole class work, small group work, paired work on keyboards and so on. When they do small group work it is one group per room, so we are not having to get two groups in here or something like that. So they can really concentrate, and certainly the quality of work is a lot better. I mean, if I compare it to the work...when I first came here, we didn't have as much space, we didn't have the practice rooms. And, you know, the quality of work suffered...and certainly, my previous school similarly. So well, you know, it makes a big difference.

**Oscar** Would you try to describe what was the plan for those lessons?

**Patrick (6)** Mm...right. I'll try to remember now. Let's take...actually both we'd been looking at melody writing...not melody writing but melodies generally. We'd approached that in different ways, through performing, singing particularly, and eventually through composing as well. So, improvising seemed a good step to take really, almost as a preliminary...as a musical experience in its own right and also as a step onto composition. Because, generally speaking, their compositions will arise actually from improvisation. So what I wanted them to do, first the most important thing really, was to actually – I think I talked about it later on actually – getting into the groove of the music, feeling the beat, particularly, when they play. So, they're actually playing in time. And that was the first stage. From that...I think, later on I start just off from one note with the year sevens and go from there. I suppose that's the most important thing. And to be confident in doing that. And also it's in terms of playing technique, are they holding their beaters correctly, hitting in the middle of the notes, those sort of quite fundamental things. And then from there, looking at – I think particularly with the year eights – looking at how melodies can be constructed, so I think we talked about phrasing. And the idea that when they are writing a melody or improvising a melody, you know, just starting simply notes next to each other, that less is more, really. That they don't have to be jumping all over the place...and to keep it simple. And I think, with some of them we'd sort of pointed out, had a repetition and contrast, as well. So, structuring their ideas, and so on. So...that's really what we were looking at. Getting into the groove, feeling rhythms and then actually, being confident at constructing a melody.

**Oscar** OK. I think we could watch the next one.

**Patrick (7)** OK.

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from the Year 7 rondo improvisation lesson introduced in the first extract. Patrick teaches pupils the 'A' tune*

*of the rondo (ABACADA...) and they play as a group. The extract starts at the end of the pupils playing as a group. Patrick brings in individual improvisation, starting to play with a single note. After attempts by three students, Patrick gives some advice on what to do when improvising.*

**Patrick (8)** Could I finish my answer to the last question?...

**Oscar** Yes [laugh].

**Patrick (9)** ...I'd forgotten that I'd been teaching them a tune, first. So one of the things as well, the idea of the phrasing, as well as developing things, just some aural skills, you know, hearing a tune and copying it and also, and also memory skills. But, there also then, the idea of phrasing and so, will come out from the tune they've learned. Because that falls into four very regular phrases. So they'll also pick that up through very intuitively. It was interesting looking at the improvising on the one note, how they all, particularly the girl and in the other one, fell in the four bar phrases. The piece I choose as well. It was chosen because it works very well in that sort of sixteen bar pattern. The last four bar phrase it has a different get in to it, sort of different chords. It's very obvious that the end is coming up, so they also know when to finish off the tune. Yes, so there was that as well, which I'd forgotten about.

**Oscar** Where were these tunes from? Where did you get them?

**Patrick (10)** The tune...?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Patrick (11)** Oh, from...*Jazz in the classroom*, Eddie Harvey. It's a piece called 'Arriba'. It works very well. The tune that I taught them is the one that he gives as a theme before improvising. I altered it a little bit, I made it slightly simpler, because I know what the class is like. And also, I didn't want to spend a disproportionate amount of time learning the tune, I wanted to get on with the improvising. The other reason for doing the tune as well, is that it then breaks up...when we do the class improvising, we don't just sit there 'right everybody solos'. Every, you know, minute or so, we've perhaps three or four people improvising, then everybody gets a chance to play again. So it keeps everybody sort of focussed, if they start to drift off a bit, then we'll have some more solos and then everybody plays, in that rondo form. So, that works quite well as well.

**Oscar** I was going to ask if you follow some process to teach how to improvise?

**Patrick (12)** Yes...I suppose the first thing, if we go right back to basics, it's physically, like I said before, physically to set up the conditions. So they are sitting round with the instruments. Then, just basic technique in terms of how to hold the beater, and where to hit the instrument and so on. Also very basic things, as I said there, about looking at what they are doing, as well as, obviously I want them to listen, as well, but, I ask to look...as it's a very straight forward way to get them to concentrate on what they are doing, and it also makes them slightly less inhibited, a big help if they are just looking at the xylophone or metallophone, at what they are doing, as well as obviously having the accuracy, they can actually hit the notes if they are looking at the instrument. That's the first thing. And then, from my point of view, the most important thing is actually feeling the flow, as I kept saying, the flow of the music, actually getting into the rhythm. If they're not feeling that flow, if they're not playing in time, then the whole thing can fall apart. And particularly for that, although you could say, you could analyse and discuss what being in time means and

obviously that's something you have to be very careful of, you could hear a student improvising, you might think 'oh they are not playing in time', but actually they are playing five against four. And then, if you ask someone else to play five against four, that's a very difficult thing to do. So, you do have to be quite careful. It's very easy to dismiss the child's work, 'oh that's not in time' and actually it is. It's just very complex timing. However, one of the things that I wanted to do was that they're improvising in rhythm, in time with the tune that we were doing. That was another reason for doing the tune... improvising basic rhythms to that intuitively. So that was the next thing and that was the rationale behind asking just to improvise on the one note, to start with. Just to get the idea of the rhythm. And also, to introduce later that less is more. So they can just gradually add other the notes, into it. So I suppose, that's a starting point.

**Oscar** And would you try to describe what is your role as a teacher when working with pupils' improvisations?

**Patrick (13)** I suppose, ultimately my role is to be a musician, and to be part of that improvisation. So, I do that through, in this case, I was providing the accompaniment. I also...I suppose it's also trying to teach through the music. So there were certain things, when they'd first had a go, we don't stop in between, so the beat keeps going right into the next person, so, to try and keep the momentum going, and really just to guide things forward, ultimately. But also, to be sensitive to know when to intervene. So, they'll be certain times when I'd want to say 'this is what you should do'...so, for example, there were moments when, at setting up the room, explaining how to hold the beater...there are certain things that were 'this is what I want to', that's what I was going to set up. So I was setting up the conditions in which the music could be made. So I suppose my job as a teacher, is to set up those conditions very clearly. And then, to take part in the music making as well. Obviously overriding all of that, I'm looking at their overall musical development. So I'm seeing this lesson, this activity within a bigger scheme of things. And also, part of my job is to help them to realise that as well, to start making connections between the activities they do, between one lesson and the next, one half term with the next, one term with the next, one year with the next. So they actually see that what they do, it's not just...that it has an immediate value, and enjoyment and so one, but then to make connections in the bigger picture. So they actually feel they are learning things. I suppose that's Swanwick who says that learning is what you take away at the end. And so, this idea that they...they have something to take away. Whether it be something like 'I can do this now that I couldn't do before'; It might be that 'I really enjoyed doing this, I have enjoyed improvising, I have learned to play a tune, I've heard this piece of music that I really like'. So it doesn't just happen on this learning of facts, it's gonna be more about...a memory of an experience that's very important. And I suppose ultimately, what I'm trying to do, not just in my lessons but as a department, is try to create a very distinctive musical culture. But that's my bit of research, so I wouldn't go into that...[laugh]. No, but I like this idea that school music is a very distinctive and positive music subculture. And that's very important for what we do. And so that's also what I'm trying to do. And I'm part of that.

**Oscar** I've got some more questions for that at the end...

**Patrick (14)** OK.

**Oscar** How long have you been Head of Music?

**Patrick (15)** I've been Head of Music here for...this is my fifth year, and I was Head of Music at my previous school, for three and a half years. And then I was a classroom teacher for a year and a half before that. So, I've been teaching...this is my tenth year of teaching.

Most of that I've been Head of department. In my last school, I was the only music teacher there, so it was just me.

**Oscar** I think we could watch the next one.

**Patrick (16)** OK.

*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson as the second extract. The Year 7 pupils have learned to play a sixteen-bar tune on the percussion instruments. Following this, Patrick introduces individual improvisation. Then they play the tune in a rondo form with solos several times. The extract is taken from the end of the second period of the lesson. We see different solos played by seven students. At the end of the rondo exercise they give themselves a round of applause.*

[After the viewing, Patrick asks to play this extract again, without giving me time to ask any questions. We watch it for a second time.]

**Oscar** What is your impression about this extract?

**Patrick (17)** Em, what's my impression...I'm very impressed actually! With most of the...I was very impressed with the improvising actually, overall. That's why I asked you to play it again, because I've got absorbed into one, I was thinking about that instead, and I forgot the next thing...that struck me. I didn't like the way that I interrupted one girl. I don't know if it was the second or third one, and I said to her...not the one when she played it again, but there was one she'd gone through it once, and she started again and I said 'change the rhythm' and I sort of spoke that over the top. And looking at that, I think that's rather a rude thing to do, actually. I sort of cut across the music. I suppose I was wanting her to develop what she had done. Because the first sort of way through was very good, and I wanted her to do a bit more, but I'm not quite sure whether shouting across was a very musical way of doing it. Although, she did you that and it changed and that was fine. But perhaps it would've been a...I mean, perhaps what I should have done, is that she did it through again, then I just kept playing the chords and said 'right have another go, this time think about it, rather than just sort of barking across the music'. I don't think that was very good actually, on my part. Yes, that struck me. Something that I noticed – I know you may ask about anyway – I look at what they are doing, that's very important, so I can see what is going on, because that is gonna help me sort of understand where they are coming from. So, for example the girl, when I asked to do it again, I initially asked because it had become...she hadn't got into the groove, into the beat, the flow of the music, right from the start. So she was lost, and I could see, not only could I hear it, but I could've thought perhaps she was doing some very subtle rhythm, but when I looked at her she was gazing around. So she obviously had lost it and was feeling rather foolish and her gesture was fairly sort of random. OK, so...that's why I asked to do it again. She started it the second time, and me asking her to play a bit louder, so the initial thing is just a confidence thing. If you just sort of tickle the notes, you want something more sort of solid there, which she did. And I was quite pleased with her, that although she was a bit taken a-back to be asked to do it again, and she sort of paused a little bit, she did it and it was better. And I think then she went through a third time, and it was better still, and she'd sort of got into it. So, I was quite pleased with how that had worked. I think all of them picked up the idea of phrasing, which I was really pleased with. I was quite pleased to see just how they were as a class. They are a very lively group. I think it's nice, you know, there seemed to be a nice sort atmosphere between us, how I remember it. So, yes, I was pleased, overall...I've said apart from that bit with me interrupting, everything else good.

**Oscar** Right. Are some of your pupils more creative than others?

**Patrick (18)** [Laugh]...I suppose it depends what you mean by creative, but that's what you are looking into [laugh]. Oh dear!...I was wondering when that word would come up, because it's...I don't know, it's not a word...If I said it's not a word I use very much, that would be a wrong thing to say. Em...

**Oscar** It's difficult to define...

**Patrick (19)** It is. That's what I'm trying to do in order to answer the question. Em...oh dear. I think much more, what I'm trying to do, is to create the conditions in which people can be creative. Myself as well. I mean, I find teaching very creative, so I want to set up conditions in which I can be creative as a teacher. And I want to create the conditions in which they can be creative as learners, and as musicians. So, that's why I place such an emphasis on certain basic things, you know, getting the room laid out properly, where they were sitting and so on. Because, in a very straight forward way, if they are constantly messing around, then I can't actually enjoy teaching and get on with it. I'm not just sort of there for crowd control. So, if I'm going to set the conditions in which students can be creative, I suppose I would just follow those sort of basic things, getting, you know, holding of the instruments, the beaters, basic technical things, rhythm...and build it up from there. I suppose I'm really not quite sure what you mean by being creative. I mean I know we have this every day thing of 'we are making new things' you know, but...I suppose it links with this idea of like self-expression as well. I think that's a term that's often bounded around but, what does it mean?. I mean, can you say that 'oh yes they are improvising this'...Are they expressing themselves?. Are they really expressing themselves by playing a pentatonic tune on the xylophone? I'm not sure. It's an expression of something possibly, but their music making I think it's much more of a social expression actually rather than just everything individually, in that instance I suppose. Are some students more creative than others? I suppose I could say that some students, at certain times can be more musically able than others, I don't know. I mean, that doesn't necessarily mean that they are creative, though. I don't think I would pigeonhole students sort of 'they are musically creative and these are not'. Some students may be very advanced at musical recreations, and they are very technical players, but that's not the same thing as being creative. I suppose I would be looking for them to be imaginative, in their use of sound, so... Perhaps in a composition, for example, and I think composing is possibly the area that's most suited to exploring their imagination, I suppose if I want to make that equate with creativity, if they are putting sounds together in unusual ways, or...you know, very often the way I teach is to give a very straight forward musical starting point, and then to see what they do with that. And some people will be much more imaginative, and I suppose therefore you might say 'creative', in what they take from that, and others would be less so. But I don't think it's a straight forward thing, and I wouldn't...you know, it depends on so many things. So, for example, a student might be very creative on one day, one lesson and not the other, for a whole variety of reasons. Perhaps they just weren't...you know, they brought other things with them into that lesson, they weren't in a good mood, whatever, perhaps it was that one thing they did was vocal and they really feel confident in singing, so that released a whole lot of things and another thing was keyboard but they can't stand it, so that really turned them off. It might be that at the starting point they felt really inspired, 'I am gonna go off' and they were really into it, and then another time they weren't, or they might be a group of people that sort of bangs ideas off, and another time they didn't. So, I'm quite weary about labelling students as being creative or not creative. I would take a much more individual basis on, depending upon the activity and the situation and the lesson as it goes across. And obviously you can look back, you can see well over this course of things this student has produced this sort of work, over a time. But, you know, it could all change...

**Oscar** Right, so, would you say their motivation influences their outcome?

**Patrick (20)** Yes, yes. I think their motivation and their skills do. And what I can do as a teacher, I can teach them the skills – sort of perhaps the concepts that underpin some of those skills and so on as appropriate – and I can create a positive environment in which they can work, and I feel that they are the conditions from which creativity can grow. But I don't feel that I can teach them to be creative. I mean if you are going to equate creativity with originality, then I suppose I couldn't teach to them, it's like just talking, and that would be coming from me, and not from them, so I can really just set up conditions. You can teach them how to handle sounds, how to sort of handle them playing-wise, how to handle when they are listening to make sense of sounds, to sort of take them apart and grasp what they can do with them. And you know, give them instruments and space and always things to take sounds and then go away and do it, you know, use other things as a model or a stimulus and so on. I suppose that's what I'm trying to do. But I suppose really my emphasis is on those starting points, and then the creativity will grow, will come from there. It's not that I'm just saying 'oh well, if it comes it comes and if doesn't it doesn't'. I mean I suppose ultimately I do want the students to be imaginative. I think I find that word more useful than being creative. I don't know why. I just find there's a lot of baggage with creativity. And people bang it around, and you know, they said 'the music teaches creativity'. Well I don't know what that means, what possibly can that mean? You know, if people are going to be 'creative in sounds', does that mean they can be creative in...I don't know 'designing something', in technology, or in their use of numbers? I mean...how can it?...well I don't think it does, but it's, you know, it's one of these National Curriculum's nonsense that they've put in, that's supposed to tie it all together, and I don't know...I don't know what it means really. So I don't use it very much.

**Oscar** About motivation, when you get in a lesson different motivations...how do you manage to motivate them?

**Patrick (21)** By treating them as human beings, really. I think one of the things in my teaching, is that I don't treat my students really any differently than I treat anyone. I suppose that's the basis of it. That the atmosphere that I try and create is one that is relaxed but purposeful. And I suppose, ultimately, my teaching rests upon the relationship that I have with my students, on an individual and as a class basis. And it's because they have a positive attitude to me, and then to the subject that they work, you know, that I can motivate them to do things. So, very often they will come in a very positive way to the lessons anyway, so they'll have a positive expectation from the start, because we've created, we've built that up, because they enjoy what they do. If they are not having a good day or they are not enjoying the subject, then very often I would try and sort of jolly them along really, through humour. Through...you know, sometimes a little bit of 'oh, you're a right old moaner you' and a bit of teasing, because they know they can do that back to me again, and they will do. So, that part of motivation is coming from the relationship that I have with them, and we can have a bit of banter, I can get them on side, make them smile, you know, if they are coming in a bad mood. The other thing that will motivate them, I suppose, is that they...actually I know this from what we do, that if they feel that they are learning, then they will be motivated. Learning in and of itself, I believe, it's a motivating force. Human beings naturally want to learn new things. If students aren't motivated, then what I would tend to do is to look at myself first and the lesson: what is it here that we are doing that's not motivating them and how can, what can I change here to help motivate them? And there may also be factors that they are bringing in, and that's something else to deal with. But I think the motivation will come from learning, having a positive experience. And, to be honest with you, I don't have many problems with students being motivated. Even in Year 9 and so on, and even with students...you know, obviously, it's...there is a level – some kids will be keyed up and

others will be less so. But even from those who interest less so, I can usually get them to be more positive about their work, and motivated.

**Oscar** Does the family background influence their musical ability?

**Patrick (22)** Em...yes, well...it can do, but it's not a simple correlation. So you might find that students who are heavily sort of committed to music in school, you may find that they come from, you know, a musical background, their parents are musicians, they listen to a lot of music at home and so on. But then, equally, I have to say - and I am like this, my family were not musical at all - you'll find students who are musically, you know, sort of able or enthusiastic or committed and so on, who don't come from a musical background. I will find some students who, you know, they do a lot of things and they have very supportive parents, so that might be important, indeed, I think it is in many ways, for a successful school, that students come from quite a stable and supportive background, but then they'll be other students who are musically very able, who don't come from that sort of background. So, I don't think I can generalise, really. And then I can think of students who are very musical, musically able, by whatever criteria you wish to judge that by, who don't have musical backgrounds and others who do. I think what I try and do, is provide the musical stimulating background here in school, and the stability and that sort of positive environment, as I said earlier, this idea of a community of musicians, is very important to the work that we do here. I mean if I look at how music has developed over the last five years, it's really just exploded. I mean, about a third of the school, between a quarter and a third of the school will have instrumental lessons. You know, we do concerts every half term with whole year groups; We have sixty people doing GCSE music, thirty in each year group, a large A level group - fifteen and twelve...sorry fifteen and ten, so twenty five all together - so...and that comes from the work that we do in the classroom. At the centre of what we do is our Key Stage 3 teaching, if the students are motivated in that they may want to go and do other things, and some students, to go back to your question [laugh], what they do in the classroom at Key Stage 3 will sort of tie in with what they are doing at home, or outside the school, or whatever. And so, they will go forward in that way. For other students, what they get in school, will be something that's very unique and special to them, that they don't get outside the school, either at home or from any other things. So, you know, every student is different really.

**Oscar** Did you have specific training in composition or improvisation in your career?

**Patrick (23)** The only composition that I ever did in my degree was just, you know, a pastiche composition of Bach chorales, string quartets, fugues...nineteenth century [microphone noise, unintelligible]. So I had to do traditional harmony and counterpoint at university and at A level. I didn't do any composition at school, and I've never done, so really then, I've never done any original composition. On the PGCE course, we were taught a little...well, we were taught a bit of how to teach composition, obviously, but...and we also, as students had to do...[end of A side of the tape]. OK. So well, yes just to say that I've done all the traditional harmony and counterpoint at university, you know, sort of very conventional Western classical stuff. At the PGCE course we were taught how to teach composition, and we had to produce, as part of the PGCE course, two compositions of our own. But, I remember finding it quite difficult to do at that time. I remember thinking that they weren't very good at that time, and indeed they weren't. And actually looking back now, I think, ironically enough, that we weren't actually taught very well at how to compose ourselves, which is quite interesting. You know I think, now, if I was asked to compose, I would actually do a much better job through the teaching that I've done, and through the connections that I've made with my own background as a performer and as sort of musical

analysis, which is where my degree lies, really. But, I would certainly not call myself a composer, and I don't do any composition myself at all...

**Oscar** I know you don't really like to talk...

**Patrick (24)** ...or improvising - sorry that was the other bit – either.

**Oscar** ...em. I know you don't like this word, but would you describe yourself as creative?

**Patrick (25)** Em...it's funny, 'cause then I would definitely say yes. And why would I say yes? I apply the word to myself and find it difficult in my teaching...The thing that struck me, time and time again, is that I will have thoughts about what I'm doing, and ideas for what I'm doing when I'm teaching, that I have not had before, until that split second moment in the lesson. And that works from different levels. So, it might be, I might be teaching, I do a sort of like the equivalent of thirty undergraduates summer school course, and also my A level teaching. So, it may be some quite sort of in depth through historical analysis, or analytical point at that sort of level; then I might see some things that I haven't seen before until we were working together on it; It may be in our improvising with the Year 7 class, or anywhere in between. But I'll have ideas that I haven't had before. And that's, for me as a teacher, it's very interesting with this whole emphasis upon planning to the 'enth degree, and this idea of you know 'objectives', and aims and objectives that you tick off at the end, and I don't approach my teaching in such a rigid way. However, I do think that one of the reasons why I do that know, is that when I started my teaching, as we all do, I was very organised...it's not that I'm not organised know. I planned every, you know, ten minutes what was going on. And I think the freedom that I have in my teaching now has come from that starting point. And I think there's an analogy there with the music teaching, you know, my emphasis on are they sitting properly, holding the beaters, those sorts of things. Only if you get that bit right, will the other things build upon that, and I think the music teacher may, sort of freedom creativity. I know that I can go in, I can just go in any class and I can just teach a lesson. And it will all be there, because that's drawing from my own experience. And I'm not saying that's what I should do all the time...and indeed I don't as we have a very carefully planned scheme of work and so on, but it's, if you like, a starting point that's planned. How they are developed and go...we'll just see what happens with the class, then. And I've the experience and the skills to be able to handle that, and I suppose it is quite...it's very easy then, to be quite resentful, and sort of officialdom. You will come and you may want to tie it back down again, and reduce everything down to your little, you know, this is what they are doing, this is five minutes, this is what they are doing then...you know, I don't know where things are gonna go. I know where I'm starting, and I know there's some things I wanna teach, but we may go off in a different way, I may pick up other things that are important. So, I suppose, for me this creativity is sort of thinking on my feet really, responding to and being sensitive as a teacher, to what's going around me, but I also, as a musician, because I think, you know, I'm teaching through my music, as well as about music. So I respond as a musician myself. It wasn't particularly obvious in the clip you choose there, but if I'm accompanying for example, you know, the patterns that I'm playing on the keyboard, I would change depending on the students. If have got, you know, I can hear they are having difficulties, I may just keep it very simple, just on the beat chords, if they are having problems fitting in. If I can hear a student is much more fluent, I may vary my patterns a bit. I will sometimes enter into a bit of question and answer with them. If I can hear a little bit that they're doing, I'll imitate it. And sometimes they'll pick that up and it'll go back and some other times they won't. So I'm also, the creativity is there as a musician, as well as a teacher, but I do feel very strongly that teaching is a creative act, it is thinking on your feet, in a positive way, drawing upon your skills and your experiences in a way that is not wholly predictable.



**Oscar** All right...

**Patrick (26)** Long answer, sorry [laughs].

**Oscar** We could watch the next one, I think.

**Patrick (27)** Yeah, right yes.

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract follows the previous one. In the third extract some Year 7 pupils play their solos in a rondo exercise. At the end, they give themselves a round of applause. This extract starts after the applause. Patrick asks which solos they prefer and why, and the pupils comment on their solos. The teacher asks if they are pleased or unhappy with their own solos. The pupils respond articulately. Some of them say they are happy with their own solos and a few say they are not pleased with them. Patrick asks one student who isn't happy with her solo to play it again. He finishes with some more comments on how to improvise.*

**Oscar** Could you describe what were you doing in this part of the lesson?

**Patrick (28)** Right...The actual improvising it's, I suppose, put it into three stages. The first part of the lesson, was just setting up the conditions, the instruments and so on. Then, we actually made the music, so we're doing the improvising, and we were going round the tune came in and so on, and that was all there. And, the final stage, we were trying to reflect upon what we'd just done, and I suppose that is the distinctive bit about music in the classroom, that that part is there. Now, I don't believe it's always necessary. I think there are times when to have had the experience is enough, OK. But there are other times when I would want to reflect upon and analyse that experience and what we've done, what we've achieved, with the aim of, I suppose really, to try to conceptualise, to understand intellectually what we've done, sometimes that's important, and then I suppose to develop or improve upon it later. So I don't think it's always necessary to do that, but I think sometimes it's useful, and I certainly wanted to do it here, because they will be developing and improvising further. So that was the general tone, and I wanted to...the approach I decided to take was to ask them, a very straight forward question 'which ones, if there's anybody who you particularly liked' because that seems to me...you know, we have a gut reaction, I can tell that when, it's often noticeable if you're going around and improvising in a class and often...one thing I didn't notice was the amounts of back heads fidgeting. Which is interesting for me as a teacher, because at the time you filter a lot of that out, you are not aware of the extent of it, although it may be made worse with the microphone, it will may be pick up things more than it might otherwise, for example. But it is quite noticeable. But when someone is improvising and it's really good, then often everything will become really hushed. And you see...the students will know, as we all know 'oh that's really good'. And I wanted to take, I wanted to build upon their gut reactions, of which one do they think 'oh yeah, that one really stood out'. It's always interesting, whenever I do that, the ones that people comment on are the ones I've noticed as well, you know, they all go 'oh yes, that was really good'. And then we can take that, so then next is what made it so good. So we sort of agreed there, 'why did you think that was quite good?' so they have to start taking it apart. And sort of taking the ideas they said, then I repeated it just to make sure everybody had heard. And what's interesting of course...because the way the things they say, the things that they've picked up in the lesson...now that's quite interesting because it might be that, are they just saying things because they know I said them before, so they know it's the right answer? I would like to think not in this case, that they are actually...I think it's actually Jerome Bruner who talks about the spiral curriculum and actually building up from, from the

sort of fundamental nature of the subject. So you can do that by teaching through with the music. You know, they are hearing things and the way that they are hearing, the way that it works is the way that I've taught it, that's how I started off, by thinking about the rhythm, getting into using different instruments, and so on. And that's how they are hearing it, and I suppose I'm teaching them to hear, to break down the music in that way. And I believe that ultimately, will be a useful way in which develop their musical creativity or imagination, or whatever. And I have to say that, that way of doing it I've taken from Keith Swanwick's work, and I have done for many years before I started my MA studies, and I find his notion of his musical layers, whilst I know a lot of people who disagree with him and this sort of psychological perspective more criticised through the research method or whatever...I find it a very useful way of looking at how we can use...the way of looking at musical understanding. And so what I'm actually doing is trying to take them through those layers, so they are thinking about, you know, materials, is it fitting together the song, they're also thinking about structure, repetition, contrast, and so all these things came out. We didn't particularly talk about style, or sort of mood or character within expressive qualities. I didn't want to sort of focus in on that. If you like that was set apart by the chord progression, the accompaniment, but another time we will do. So I suppose yes, the whole point of that was to reflect upon what they'd just done...and to think about what they'd done. It was interesting when I asked them who was pleased with what they'd done, a few were, but not many. That's quite interesting. I wasn't especially surprised with that class. They're a class who are less cohesive as a group, than the other Year 7 class that I have. They are much more sort of fractious as a class. There's a lot more sort of fallings out, lots more of tempestuous time. Some of them are weaker in terms of their linguistic ability and numeracy and SATS, if you look in there for SATS results, that sort of thing. And so, they are more defensive as a class, you know, they don't gel, it's more difficult to build that up together. Another Year 7 class I have, are much more sort of unit, are much more supportive, and I think there they were like 'mine was good and mine was also good'. Here it's more difficult, and that's some...that's one of the things I want to build upon and develop within the class. Does that answer the question...?

**Oscar**            Yeah.

**Patrick (29)**    [Laughs]

**Oscar**            [Laugh] I think we can watch the last one.

**Patrick (30)**    OK.

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: This extract is taken from the end of the Year 8 lesson introduced in the first extract. During the second period of the lesson they play a rondo with improvisations, following a similar structure as the Year 7 class of previous extracts. This extract includes some examples of Year 8 students improvising. When they finish playing the rondo, Patrick comments on the solos with the students.*

**Oscar**            We have just seen the last extract. How did you assess these pupils? In general how do you assess...?

**Patrick (31)**    Oh, just in general terms, how would I assess what they've done? Or these ones specifically...?

**Oscar**            Well, if you remember these ones...

**Patrick (32)** I'll do it if I can...[laughs]...I had a long day. I suppose what I'm looking for is, first of all, 'are they playing in time?'. So, for example, there was one girl there that wasn't, I think she may be the second one...she was one before the one who was very good!. And I said to her, when she went through it again, I said just 'keep it in time' and I counted along and it was much better then. So I suppose that's the first thing I'm looking for: 'are they actually in the groove, with the flow of the music, playing along in time?' And it wouldn't matter whether the rhythm is very simple, or complex, or whatever, if it's just in time. And she wasn't and it was better then, when we counted. I suppose then I'm looking for certain...I'm listening perhaps to the phrasing, I don't know what order I listen to this, but listening in terms of the phrasing, 'is it in fact there?', and I suppose part of that is then patterning, 'are they certain patterns there?' And particularly I suppose, patterns will come up through the repetition of ideas, so they've got an idea, they're repeating either a particular rhythm that remains the same, 'are they using that rhythm taking up or down to different notes?', OK. I suppose the next stage would then be 'have they got a rhythm that has some sort of character to it? Is there's a sense of style about it, or is it just a very sort of simple...?' You know, and that's why I want to look at how they are playing, if they are playing with a degree of sensitivity, or is just that...even if it's in time, and perhaps with some simple phrases. Then, I suppose I'm listening to 'are they getting a sort of balance between contrast and repetition?' Then being able to vary there, rhythmically initially, I think could be easier, considering it as a one level. Then are they also varying in terms of pitch wise as well. A follow on from that would be, in terms of, 'are they structuring... is there awareness of the overall sixteen-bar chord progression, that's actually four lots of four? Are they building some sort of climax?' You know, particularly in this sort of style, within the third phrase or whatever, 'is it going up one pitch and then coming down? How are they ending it?'. So, they build subtle structural awareness through improvising. Those are things I'm looking for, and they can be apparent, that sort of high level can be apparent even if it's very simple rhythms. But I'm very aware, for example, the girl who was very good, it was very good...you know, it had many of those things I've just said. But it would be wrong to say it was good just because it had some syncopated rhythms, and so on. It may be somebody that had very syncopated rhythms, doesn't have that other...you know, this higher awareness in terms of musical structure and shape. Whereas someone else could be very effective with very, very simple rhythms, you know, minims, crotchets and quavers and so one. So it doesn't have to be...it's not the complexity of the rhythms that I'm interested in.

**Oscar** Right. Did you have the same lesson before with these students?

**Patrick (33)** With these students?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Patrick (34)** Mm...I'm just trying to think. They have done some improvising in a similar way to that...yes they did back at the...when was this? February...?

**Oscar** Yes. It was...

**Patrick (35)** They had done a little bit before, sort of introducing melodic ideas, so they have done, with a different chord progression. But one of the things...I can't remember if I actually got them to start on one note, or anything? I don't think I did, but I can't remember, now. We may have done it before, I think. So it's a continuation. It was interesting to see, I know we only saw a few here, but the level, the shift in a level from the Year 7 class, and lets say when I've done this sort of thing with my Year 9, it's noticeable again, and that's very interesting, because it's not that we explicitly teach lots of musical skills on, you know, on improvising tunes, they're not having a whole course on that but it's getting good, it's well you do it along with other things. But it's interesting to see how, obviously inside,

musical connections are being made, and musicality is being developed. Yes, it's just very noticeable here, the quality of the work here, compared to the Year 7 class. But overall, the overall class standard was higher. So the weakest ones are not as weak, but also that the best ones were better, than before. So, I think there's sort of a...yes.

**Oscar** How would you describe the best ones?

**Patrick (36)** I suppose in a way that I was saying before, and again, that for me derives from Swanwick's musical layers, so his materials or whatever...you know, 'are they playing in time', quite basic things; expressive qualities, are they certain, is there a sense...I often describe that myself like if there's sense of style in what they're doing OK, starting to introduce elements of repetition and contrast. And then in a structural thing, are they aware of that, in this case, building towards a climax where this four bar phrase structure and so on. So I suppose it's through that, that I'm evaluating their progress. And this idea of 'making sense' I suppose is very important too.

**Oscar** It seemed to me that some of them picked it up quickly. They improvised easily, like...

**Patrick (37)** Yeah.

**Oscar** ...you know, having lunch, or...

**Patrick (38)** [Laugh] Yes. They haven't done a lot of it before. But one thing again, they are all quite, which I'm very pleased with, they are fine about playing in front of each other. And that's very important, the idea of environment, even when, you know, I had to sort of encourage 'just do it again, keep it in time'. She did and it was better, and you know, it was OK. And even though she obviously felt a little bit uncomfortable, about being asked to do it again, like the girl in Year 7 class. She did, no one...there was adverse reaction from anybody else. No one laughs, if it all goes wrong, because we are used to having that sort of safe environment, really.

**Oscar** Do you feel confident with these kind of activities?

**Patrick (39)** Yes. Totally [laughs]. Yes, I do. Do you want me to expand...?

**Oscar** [Laugh] No, that's...

**Patrick (40)** Yes, I think I do.

**Oscar** Now a difficult one. How do you view the National Curriculum for music and its attainment targets, including those related to composing and improvising?

**Patrick (41)** I could say the National Curriculum is an irrelevance, in that I suppose in a day to day basis, it is for me, and for our planning as well. If I was more constructive...[microphone problem]. However that would be slightly unfair. I think basically, the National Curriculum is a good starting point. But I see it very much as a starting point, and not as an end point. It bears, as far as I'm concerned, it's pretty...I was gonna say, it's quite un...you know, it's not very controversial. There is a lot of argument about how it's been put together and all the background behind it and so on, but, you know, you could look at it and say 'well, yes' you know, everything is in there, that are the sort of things that we as musicians do. And so there's nothing in the National Curriculum in terms of the attainment targets that I have any real objection to. So, I feel that if you are teaching in a genuinely musical way, in a genuinely musical curriculum, all of those things will be covered. Now, I

believe, and I know that our curriculum is like that, so I just put it away. So I don't actually look at the National Curriculum ever, really. So in that sense it's irrelevant, but because I feel that is a starting point and I can look through it, and I can see... 'yes we do all that, fine'. And just put it away...so I'm not too bothered by it.

**Oscar** In a previous conversation you showed me schemes of work for Key Stage 3...

**Patrick (42)** Oh yeah, yes.

**Oscar** ...for your school, where it was written that 'National Curriculum attainment targets for each module are not listed' because you work with all of them in each module. Would you explain further your curriculum and schemes of work at Key Stage 3?

**Patrick (43)** Right, OK. Have you got a lot of tape there...? [laughs] No I'll keep it brief. OK. The first thing we do, is that we look at the Key Stage as a whole. For Year 7, we can sum up Year 7 as really focussing on the ingredients of music. And certain...and sort of music as expressive quality. So, if I'm tying that in with Swanwick's layers, which is where this comes from, it's those first two layers, materials and expression. So, what we are doing there is taking students, whatever their previous experiences from their primary schools, and seeing where we are from there, and then developing those sort of fundamental skills. If you like, we are looking at, you know, how to make the sounds, and how to make them and how to use, listen to, appreciate them, how sounds are made, how they should make them vocally, instrumentally and so on, and how to use those sounds, and recognise them being use expressively. That's really what we are focussing on. And obviously elements of structural things come into it as well, of course it does, but the emphasis in Year 7 is on those more, sort of fundamental things. So, in very concrete terms, it would be sort of vocal technique, and that's something we feel very important about, actually teaching vocal technique, not just learning the notes of a song; basic keyboard technique, using percussion instruments and skills of...sort of composition skills, basic musical elements, introducing rhythm, pitch notation, using graphic notation, through activities performing-composing-listening, pairs, groups, whole class, putting on concerts and so on, and also, it's very importantly, using these skills...to make these sounds in an expressive way. So, when we teach songs, in a variety of musical styles, it's not enough just to know the notes, to know the words, to sing it in tune, but also the musical style, how are we going to sing it. So we might sing one song in one way, one in another. So we're always looking at that expressive level, because it's very easy to forget that, and get all bogged down in sort of basic things, you know. So, that's what we are looking at in Year 7, in a nutshell. And we start...in terms of structural things, the emphasis in there, we may just talk about beginnings, middles and ends. And we'd look at adding contrast and repetition, but that's it really. In Year 8, the focus shifts slightly to look at how sounds are put together, so we are more looking at that sort of structural layer. Obviously, we're still developing skills, you know... how many times do you see kids doing a ternary composition, and it's actually musically as dull as ditch water but, hey they've got their contrasting middle section, so it must be OK. We still emphasise that music is expressive and explore ways in which music can be expressive, but we start looking at sort of structural ideas as well. And sometimes it's, you know, sections, structure, that's one thing, but also exploring more this idea of contrast and repetition, the idea of musical climax, of shaping, and how structure it's an expressive thing as well; so, exploring those ideas. In Year 9, we explore much more musical styles. Now it's obviously not true to say we haven't done musical styles before, in Years 7 and 8, of course we have, we've explored the musical styles, but here the emphasis is upon why does this musical style sound like it does and why does this style sound so different. And obviously, some of the reasons for that lie in musical materials that are used, the nature of the musical expression and the conventions that are used for that expression, and how the sound is structured, so it should all support what

they've done in Year 7 and 8. The emphasis is upon these different musical styles. So, that's really, so there is a progression in Key Stage 3. It's not a sort of linear thing, that's a bit of cliché, but we have this sort of spiral, so we constantly revisit certain things, but also the curriculum is structured so that there is a sort of progression horizontally. So even in Year 7, if there are students...we can actually push students further up the spiral – this sort of Swanwick spiral as well – within the stuff they are doing in Year 7, and then in Year 8, although it's building upon that, some students will still be at the bottom of the spiral, but that's OK, because that fits into how we are working. So, there is a constant sort of up and down. We will also, when we start something new, for example in Year 9, we may be doing a particular thing on...yes, sort of sixties songs, one, four and five, so we are right back on materials again. You know, this is four to five, can we play it can we do it, this is how we do on the xylophone, these keyboards, whatever, singing it...but from that some students will just about...that will be their level, and they'll spend their time trying their chords or whatever. Others will move straight beyond, you know, move beyond that and, using expressively, writing longer songs, whatever it may be, and move up from there. So it's quite...the curriculum is quite sort of closely knit, in terms of where we're going and why are we going there. However, essentially, it's built together as a series of starting points. And that's terribly important, it's not really prescriptive in what we have to do. It's a series of musical starting points. What we are really encouraging students to do is to, from that starting point, you know, to make music from there, through teaching certain skills, concepts and ,you know, all the rest of it. Yes, that's what we do...

**Oscar** OK...

**Patrick (44)** As in the National Curriculum...I mean, none of that is in the National Curriculum. So, I mean, if I taught my curriculum to them...if I follow the National Curriculum, it would be as dull as ditch water really, isn't it?

**Oscar** You also gave me a copy of the rationale for music in the school.

**Parick (45)** Yeah.

**Oscar** Would you try to summarise the kinds of...

**Patrick (46)** [Laugh]

**Oscar** Not the rationale [laugh]...the kinds of music activities going on and the aims of these activities.

**Patrick (47)** In the lessons, or generally?

**Oscar** In the lessons and outside the lessons.

**Patrick (48)** OK, right. Ultimately what we are trying to do is create a very positive and vibrant musical culture within the school. And this is something that I've always believed to be true. It's only in recent years that I've become more able to articulate that that is what our aim is. The students will have very positive musical lives outside the school possibly, and possibly experiences that they'll bring them in. But I get very annoyed when I hear people talking of school music in quite a sort of sneering way, it is a put down. And I read, as this is what my own research is going to be about, how people are talking about how, you know, there is 'real music' and then there is school music. Well, school music is real music, and one of the things, I believe the most important thing, if the students feel they belong to a strong musical culture in school, as part of their school lives, and that is the ultimate thing, is belonging to a culture, and this where this sort of motivation thing comes from. People

coming to music by and large with a very positive attitude towards the subject. And I mean music is an uplifting thing, OK?, and when things work, obviously it doesn't happen all the time, but many times there are, and people feel uplifted in some way. Now, that's not something we TEACH, but we can create the conditions in which that can happen. And, you know, you saw a bit of the Year 9 things, had some of the song writing and the concert. And that would affect people in a way that you cannot quantify, that you cannot put on in a level. But, you know, it changes...it affects people's lives. That's what they will remember, when they leave school, that's what they'll look back on. That's what I'm trying to create, really, and, although we cannot teach that, we can create the conditions for that, and I believe that the conditions for it are, can be, go right back to very BASIC things. And that is being organised as a department, having decent facilities, that students take an active process in their learning, that they are conscious of the fact that they are learning, not merely that they are learning, but they can also, you know, their sort of metacognition, they are aware that they are learning new things, they can take responsibility for their learning and take it forward in particular directions that they want to do...and I believe that's really the heart of what we do. Yes, we do all these other things, we make sure that we have, you know, good practice, a range of musical styles, you know, from different cultures, different periods in time, popular music, classical music, you name it, so we do all of those things. We do it in a practical way, in terms of, you know, that two thirds I suppose roughly is performing-composing, one third listening, and you know we use the keyboard, pairs, work group, work whole class...we do all those things, but, for me again, all that is in the National Curriculum, but that is a starting point. You can do all that, but it will not ultimately create this sort of musical culture and environment that is what all trying to create here. And, you know, the range as I said already, the most important thing are the Key Stage 3 lessons, because all of this comes from that, it's everybody's entitlement, if people feel positive about what they've learned or what they've done in the classroom, they'll want to do more of it. And I hadn't realise this, really, until a student teacher last year commented. And then, it's true, that I don't think...I think almost literally, there must be a few exceptions but, virtually literally not a day will go by, not a single day will go by without a student coming up to me and saying 'oh I would like to start learning this' or 'can I join the choir' or something. At least one student virtually every day, and I'm just trying to think through, and it must be a bit of an exaggeration, but really not much, that at least one student every day will come to me expressing interest in getting involved in music, you know, above and beyond their classroom things, whether is to learn an instrument or to be in a rehearsal, to take part in an extra group.

**Oscar** Could you describe a bit what is going on in instrumental tuition?

**Patrick (49)** Right, OK. We have fifteen visiting instrumental tutors...[end of the first tape]. Between a quarter and a third of the school have lessons, individual lessons, which cover orchestral instruments, all the orchestral instruments, drum-kit, all styles of guitar, piano, electric keyboard, voice...I think that's it. So, that goes on, and then there are...I think...I'm gonna try to remember now...there are about twelve to fifteen ensembles that rehearse weekly, and they are coached or directed by either some of the full-time music staff or some of the instrumental tutors. They have some part of their timetable, they are paid for that. And that's paid for by the school. They are organised at sort of three different levels. So, there are certain ensembles that are for beginners to grade two or three, that sort of standard. We have then intermediate groups, grades three to sort of five or six, and then we have certain senior groups that are either by invitation or audition, and of a much sort of higher standard. Some of these are big groups, like the choirs, wind band, the orchestra. Others are smaller chamber ensembles, so for example we have a flute quintet that our flute teacher runs, and they are all sort of grade seven and eight students, a mixture of years, maybe sixth form. We have a saxophone quartet, and again they are sort of six form students, and they perform at a very high standard and competitions, and that sort of thing. And

everything in between. So, one of the things is very important for us, is that there is also a sense of progression in the extended curriculum as well. We very consciously use the term 'an extended curriculum' rather than 'extra curriculum' because it does extend and build upon what they've done in the classroom. So, again it's very important...and the concerts that we do – I know you've seen the Year 9 - they are also very important because they build on the work that we do in the classroom. So, we do...I mean in terms of concerts, there are, I don't know, about ten or so, or twelve all across the year. We are very busy, but the three most important ones, the Year 7 concert, the Year 8 concert and the Year 9 concert, all of those grow out of the work they've done in the classroom, the whole year group takes part. So then, separately there are GCSE concerts, A level concerts and other things as well...the carol service and that sort of thing. One thing that we've started to do more often now, and we are gonna be using one of the choirs for this, all the choirs for this rather and the GCSE groups initially, but we will spread it, it's actually to do more performance in assemblies, and so on. We haven't done particularly this yet, so we are trying to do that as well. To share some of the music making within the school community, as well as sort of like usually to parents and so on. So that's another thing we've just started to introduce. So we are always constantly evaluating what we do, but our central aim remains to have a musical community, that anybody and everybody can belong to.

**Oscar** You said in a conversation some weeks ago that the...the lessons in Key Stage 3 were a starting point for their musical engagement. Could you explain further this?

**Patrick (50)** Right, well, for example...most of the time they will come from the students. So, we may be doing some singing in the class, and they may've said 'oh that was really good' and I say 'did you enjoy it?', you know, 'did you enjoy it?', they may say 'can I join the choir?', very often 'could we come along?' and I say 'yes just turn up'. Sometimes it may be that I hear some people singing, so I'll say to them just quietly afterwards 'oh, you know, you really ought to think about joining the choir'. It may be that certain students are showing particular aptitudes, so they may be doing, let's say, some improvising work, someone that's particularly fluid. Like one of the girls in Year 8 class, and actually that's how she came to light, because I said to her, at the end of that lesson I think it was, I said 'oh that was really good; you don't have any instrumental lessons at school, do you do anything out of school?' and she said that she used to have piano lessons when she was at primary school but she stopped. So I said 'well, have you thought about, you know, to carry on...?' and she said 'oh yeah'. And then a few weeks later she started to take lessons. So that's really how it works, from what they've done then, they'll either want to go and have instrumental lessons or perform...but particularly singing...sort of one or the other really. Most of the school...I think where they come into the school we ask them they to tell us or write down a little bit of what they've done before, and also if they play or sing in other groups or whatever, so anybody who already has private lessons on an instrument, or singing or whatever, we get them involved straight away. But that's generally how it happens, people from enjoying their lessons, they want to learn an instrument or have singing lessons, and they'll want to join one of the choirs. That's usually what happens.

**Oscar** Do they pay for the instrumental tuition?

**Patrick (51)** Yes. They all pay for their tuition, but there are...there are subsidies available, which range from a hundred per cent, to, you know, fifty per cent or whatever. And basically, it's always made very plain and sort of continually in a light-handed way, just that, no one should not have lessons just for financial reasons. And so, there is no sort of official criteria, but if they say to me 'oh is there any chance of having help for lessons?' then that's fine. The school puts quite a lot of...it's about...next year...this year there is nineteen thousand pounds I have to subsidise instrumental tuition. That also pays for some instrumental tuition for GCSE and A level students, and for these, some of these ensembles



we run as well. But, if you like, I suppose the budget for the extended curriculum is nineteen thousand pounds. That compares to a budget for my curriculum of about two and a half to three thousand pounds, it's a lot less. However we do get to keep all our concert takings, so in a year we'll probably make about two and a half thousand pounds from concert taking, which we plough back in to the extended curriculum, actually not into the curriculum. We use that to buy new instruments, particularly, that's what it's intended for.

**Oscar** Have you got any sort of award or money from outside the school?

**Patrick (52)** The school was awarded beacon status last year, I think. Which is a musical, relatively new government thing, which is supposed to be in schools that are a centre of excellence. And because, I think, I'm right to say that the school was invited to apply for beacon status, because it had consistently good exam results – this was by the DfEE invitation - and then, and inspection results have been good and so on, and then the school nominates certain areas in which it would like to share its good practice with, things in which it particularly excels. The two areas for this school are music and PE. So, in that sense, yes we are supposed to be a centre of excellence or good practice. I don't agree with the whole process philosophically, I think it's not that clear, I don't think it's particularly accurate either, necessarily. Because if you like...the implications then are identified, you know, this school here is supposed to be a centre of excellence for music. Does that mean that the music here is better than the three schools all around us? No, it's not. Does it mean it's good when all the other schools are coming? No it's not, you know, many schools have got excellent music departments, and they're very different, like we're saying. Departments are very different, students are very different, schools are, but... Anything else for questions? [laugh]

**Oscar** When you came to this school you told me that the music department was sort of...much smaller?

**Patrick (53)** Yeah. I mean...when I came, I have to say, there was nothing, literally no music at all. So when I came, you know it was a girls' school, I said they have choirs and so on...No choirs. There was, really, there was nothing. So in terms of...the Key Stage 3 curriculum was non-existent, literally non-existent. And the school had been...had an outstanding OFSTED report, apart from music, which was one hundred percent satisfactory, in everything across the board. So the Key Stage 3 curriculum was non-existent. There were no GCSE or A level classes, there was no extended curriculum, no orchestras, bands or anything. They used to be...they used to put on a carol service each year, that was just sort of grab ad hoc got together, by students who generally were doing musical things outside of school and got together. And then there may've been one other concert a year, occasionally, but it was very sort of, well...it was non-existent. In terms of resources, there was one class and a couple of practice rooms, no tables, no chairs. So people use to sit on the floor and write...I mean it was just quite appalling, a few broken old instruments, and that was about it really. So, you know, over the five years I've been in the school virtually, it has been a centre of inviting the school to develop. The first two years they did spend about...I mean they've spent tens of thousands in my five years here. On equipping the rooms, and on building work, building more rooms, and so on. They've spent a lot...I mean, initially they spent about five thousand pounds initially when I arrived.

**Oscar** Did they got any funding from outside?

**Patrick (54)** No. It was mainly...I think the school could see there was a problem with music in the school, and it was something they marked to develop, so they put money by...they knew that they had to tackle the problem., which is what they did. We've also seen staff expansion, so when I arrived it was just me, and the following year there was another full-time person, and the year after that we had another part-time person, and this year...next financial year, next academic year, we will expand again to another part-time person. So

there is the equivalent of three full-time teachers. So it has grown a lot. And, you know, we have got a very strong team of people here really, which is... it's really where the success lies, which is good.

**Oscar** Right. Would you like to add anything else?

**Patrick (55)** [Laughs] Mm...I think I should say for the record, with the National Curriculum thing, these new levels that have been introduced for Year 9, and I'm not, I don't know what that's all about, I think it's partly a waste of time, who cares...what do these levels mean? I haven't yet 'here we are at the end of Year 9' I haven't actually sat down and analyse it, but the brief look that I've done it doesn't... The qualitative differences from one level to another does seem rather spurious, to say the least. Some of them seem to say the same things, from level to level, you know, they've tried to make out they're different but they are not. So I think, you know, who has put these together? There is no names, it's tablets of stone handed it down, what is this? I mean I could just as legitimately just sprinkle numbers over my registry page and that would be that, I mean it's totally mean, it's just a bureaucratic exercise, what they want, I'm very cynical about it, because what they want is, they want...we have to put levels and they can then make graphs and have percentages from it. So, we have to fill in all these forms, saying how many of our students...what percentage of our students has got this level, what level or the other, then they all will get sent of the DfEE, and they'll be all these numbers crushed before, and before we know it, next September, we'll be having a lot of pie charts saying how many percentage is this, and then the next thing will come on quite sure, they'll be setting targets. They'll say to me, right, as a music department you need to get, you know, five per cent more of your students getting level six than you did last year. So what will I do? Well, I'll just make it up...I mean, this is entirely bureaucraties, it has no relevance to anything, as far I am concerned. So, that's just a waste of time, but...

**Oscar** When did they come up these new levels?

**Patrick (56)** This year is the first year, so they were...you received them, you know, last Summer or whatever, and at the end of this academic year, the current Year 9, end of Key Stage 3, we will be expected to give levels to the students. Before that, some subjects had levels, but maths...sorry, but music, PE and art, you just had to say whether they were working towards what was expected for your average fourteen year old, or whether they were achieving that, whether they were working beyond that level, or whether they were achieving exceptional performance, OK? But now, we have to put them across, I think it's...I don't even know, I think it's eight levels.

**Oscar** This is in numbers, or...?

**Patrick (57)** Yes. Level one is the lowest, level eight, I think it is eight, is the highest. But it's all fairly...you know, fairly spurious really, and I don't keep this argument quite coherently about these levels and what's going on. But they have to appreciate that it doesn't make much sense. But that's the only bit of the National Curriculum. The rest of it I just...[laugh]

**Oscar** Would you say you are happy now with the instruments and everything you have?

**Patrick (58)** Yes, I am overall. I mean, the next stage for us is to develop ICT. And a new room is being, not at the music department, but a new room that we will have access to, but we have it set up already, we can't get into it very often, but that will have enough computers and MIDI keyboards for individual students to work and do composition work. So, that's

something we desperately need to get into, although we have the hardware and software now, we don't have the room yet, to be able to do it all the time. That's the next stage. Ultimately, I would be quite keen for us to have a dedicated music technology room, with enough machines ready to be used, but that would be longer term. That's one thing. We are also expanding...I suppose we are always developing, we are constantly revising the Key Stage 3 curriculum and particularly...

**Oscar** Do you want another one...?

**Patrick (59)** Well yes because you get in a rut, but you always want to do new things, and in particularly Year 9 actually we are focusing on, and that will change quite a lot next year, we are gonna have quite a re-organisation of that. Yes, so we are always changing [laugh].

**Oscar** Would you had selected any different extracts from the lessons to make comments?

**Patrick (60)** Em...I'm trying to think back. No, they seemed to have been representative of the students that we have. You know, there was some that were weaker, and some that were more fluent, and some in-between... So no, I think that's...

**Oscar** Thanks very much for your time.

**Patrick (61)** That's all right [laugh].

**Oscar** [Laugh] It has been a real pleasure to come to the school and everything.

[I stop the tape recorder, now well into the second tape, and we keep talking for a little bit more].

## INTERVIEW WITH EMMA

*Context and description of the first video extract: All the extracts of Emma's lessons are taken from a Year 9 pop song composition project. This is the second lesson of the unit. Emma explains the structure of the lesson to the class. The first part (45 minutes) includes a warming up for singing and a rehearsal of the songs for a forthcoming concert. The second part (another 45 minutes) is continuation work for the pop song composition project. After two short extracts of the singing we see the beginning of the second part. Pupils work in four groups writing the lyrics of their songs. Two groups read their choruses before going to separate practice rooms.*

**Oscar** Do you recognise the teacher?

**Emma (1)** Did I recognise the teacher? Not very much...but yes, a little.

**Oscar** Right [laughs]. Would you try to describe what you were doing in here?

**Emma (2)** You mean as in, what the learning outcome was... or what?

**Oscar** In THIS part of the lesson.

**Emma (3)** OK. Well, there were two sections to the lesson. There was the section where we were looking at the songs for the concert that we were learning and there was also the section in the lesson where we were starting on our group compositions, when we were actually finding a starting point. This was just one way of doing it. But already the week before we had listened to a variety of choruses of successful pop songs and just sort of dissected them a little bit to see what was it that made them work. So really, what was happening in this lesson was they were just going starting looking, actually this was the second time, they were looking at their choruses, still looking at the words of their choruses, the metre of their chorus. Yes, that was it.

**Oscar** When you teach composition do you consider any specific classroom setting?

**Emma (4)** This type of composition I think is, because it's pop songs, there is a different structure from, say, a different type of composition. And I think, we have been talking about this, myself and Hanna [another music teacher], about, it is quite a difficult one because a lot of it is not just about structure, and because they are working as a group rather than just one individual there is a lot of group dynamic in there, and I think more than anything else – I've gone away from the question I know – it is about them working off each other and finding, hopefully catching that moment when it just sort of sets fire somehow. It happens at different times with every group. And there was one group today who just got to that point, six weeks later they suddenly went 'they got it', and it came together whatever it was, and they were completely fired up, so...again I've... completely forgotten the question, sorry.

**Oscar** [Laugh] What classroom environment do you use? What sort of grouping or... do you consider any specific classroom setting to work with?

**Emma (5)** As in where the kids are? As in if they are sitting in circles or they are sitting up close to me, that sort of thing do you mean?

**Oscar** Yes. And using may be practice rooms or...

**Emma (6)** Oh you mean rather than... Well, the practice rooms for me give them the space, so that I am out of their hair. So they get a chance to be in charge. And I try very hard, when we are doing things like this, to get out of their way actually and not really spend too much time with them because I think, like I just said before, one of the important parts of this is the group dynamic and I just come in and sort of, hopefully, just push it up one level when they're getting stuck, rather than coming in and giving them too many ideas. That is the reason for the practice rooms, and the reason of putting them in small circles is so that they can see each other and communicate with each other again because of the group thing within that. I think the practice rooms are very important. We have problems with how much time we can have in practice rooms and one of the reasons that it has been quite tricky with this problem is because there is another Year 9 at the same time, so we had to have half and half the time. In a perfect world I would have given them probably time in the practice room, then bring them back, feed back what they have got, the stages they'd got to, but because we had such a short amount of time this time – because we were learning songs for concert as well which we won't do again – there was that added pressure of having to learn the songs for the concert AND do the song-writing. And next year we will definitely do it a different way round, because you don't get enough time. Because if they feed back to each other, where they are, they get more ideas from each other. And again, that is the other thing about them getting ideas from each other, being inspired by each other rather than me having to say 'oh what about this and what about that?'. It doesn't work.

**Oscar** You will actually see this group work in another extract.

**Emma (7)** Right.

**Oscar** I had some questions prepared but [laugh] you are answering all of them...

**Emma (8)** OK.

**Oscar** ...at once. It is fine. Would you try to describe what was the lesson plan for this unit, because you showed me a plan when I first came to the school.

**Emma (9)** Lesson plan for the unit... Well, you start by, like I say because we are under the struggle and constraints of time, in a perfect world there is the perfect scheme for this and there is the practical world of what you have to do with practice rooms and time and a concert coming up. So there are probably two. In this setting the outcome is that they have a group song, pop song, that they have written that has the qualities of pop song, song-writing, where each member of the group is involved in some way within the piece but perhaps not singing. So it gives an opportunity for kids to be doing other things apart from singing, and still being involved in the whole song-writing project as such. So they may be good on words, they may be good on arranging but it doesn't mean they have to be singing, there may be somebody who is good at the singing but certainly in some groups I have found that the song-writer, the person with the ideas, wasn't the performer. So, there was that thing that perhaps hopefully they could take a different part in it. And I think specifically because it is year nine a lot of the students are getting to already lose, you know, they make their minds up whether they like music or not by now. There is actually a lot of that going on with the year nine students, they have 'switched off'. Actually it was a very tense term, I found it incredibly tense, and it just coming back after half term...

**Oscar** Because of me?

**Emma (10)** No! Not at all, no way. Just timing-wise and the fact that there was a whole lot of negativity about the concert and the songs and I had to push, push, push the

whole time and I got incredibly tired doing that. And now we've come back after half term, the concert is over, they got something out of the concert, they just all relaxed they've stopped fighting me. You know, it is just really relaxed and it wasn't relaxed before. So, the scheme is, the song writing is that they take part and create in groups their own song, their own ORIGINAL song. And that is then recorded or performed or taped. The other part of the scheme is that they learn songs to perform in public, at a concert. I can't go into any more detail than that, because every group goes into different stages and that is one of the sort of the challenges of the scheme, is that not every group is working at the same stage, at the same time. Some groups are much more advanced, you know, than other groups, and some groups get it straight away and some groups it takes a few weeks of struggling and then it comes through.

**Oscar** Right. That first lesson you worked with songs by *Macy Gray* and *Toploader*...would you explain what was the aim in that first lesson?

**Emma (11)** The aim was to switch them on, was to get them excited about the project, and I thought by using music that was, there was a variety of music and also there was very current music and, you know, a real eclectic mixture, that that would excite them, that would focus them, that would make them think about choruses in a way, rather than just hearing them. And that group actually were one of the most receptive groups about listening to the pieces, and actually there was a really amazing sense of listening when they listened to them I felt, specially with nine-one-one, that they were all very 'ooh let us listen!' and they were very moved by the song, I could tell, and there was something about the way they listened which was very special. So, it was really just to take some good practice, to take some good examples and say: 'Well, how did they do this?' 'How did they put together their choruses?' 'How much repetition was there?' 'Did they use a very standard traditional way of putting a chorus together where it's just four lines and the lines rhyme or...?' There were some quite unconventional choruses so, it was just opening up their eyes to the things that they could use for their choruses, devices, etcetera. Yes.

**Oscar** Right. Do you think it's useful to use some songs from the charts?

**Emma (12)** Oh yes, definitely. Because it is something they know so you don't have to get over that hurdle of it being... you know, that old saying *you like what you know*, and if they know it they like it and it means that they are actually participating on another level if they like it already. They are already participating so you don't have to get over that barrier of getting to know something, then liking it, then knowing it. So there is one step that it's actually taken out of that process I think, if you give them stuff that is current, that they know. If it's in the charts they know it backwards, they've heard it a million times, they've put it on their tape recorder, they know every word, they know every chord, they know everything. Subconsciously they know it so well.

**Oscar** You actually used projections to analyse the choruses.

**Emma (13)** Yes, put the words up.

**Oscar** What sort of activities did you practice after that, because you talked about: 'Look for the hook'...?

**Emma (14)** The hook, yes. As we went round groups, we looked at hooks, I mean that was another thing apart from words, we looked at where was the hook in the song, what was it. It didn't have to be in the words, and I think that was picked up by some groups but not all of the groups. But certainly I think some groups picked up that they could have something very simple and that would also be a very important part of the music too. So I think that

gives you that extra thing, ASPECT to the music that it is not just the singing that is important, that there are other elements of the music that are just as important as the singing. So we'd taken the hook on and I think probably once we've heard all the pieces we can then analyse them in the same way that we first analysed the successful ones. So next week, when we'll start looking at them next week and look at them on video, we'll be able to do that with them, same that we did when we started the things.

**Oscar** Let's watch the next one.

**Emma (15)** OK.

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from the same music lesson. At the beginning of the second period pupils are working in four groups within the main music classroom, writing the lyrics of their songs. Then, they go to separate practice rooms. In this extract Emma works with a group in one of the practice rooms. She helps them to find the tempo for the keyboard's drum pattern and to start shaping the melody.*

**Oscar** Would you try to describe what were you doing here?

**Emma (16)** I was trying to give them a way in to the melody without writing it for them myself. And I've just found that quite a good way of going in, if you got some words, it's almost that way of taking a tune for a walk. Just start on one note, you got to go somewhere, got to go up or you got to go down. They had a good rhythm on there and I think I was just trying to give them some opportunities to see different ways that they could take that tune for a walk really. So I was saying 'oh you could go up, you could go down'... and I wasn't gabbling, I noticed earlier that I was talking SO fast. I am surprised anybody could have heard anything I said actually. That was very, very shocking actually – that is one way of getting your introductions over quickly, I suppose. But yes, I was just giving them one example, and it just seemed like the right example at that time of how they might get in to the next step. I mean it is not the only way of getting in to a melody but it just felt instinctively like the way to go for them at that moment. I tend to do things, when I am doing things like this, terribly instinctively rather than having a plan of what I am going to tell each group, because every group will be different and every group of kids will be different and they'll have different knowledges and expectations. And I think having spent so many years working with bands and different types of musicians I think I do a lot of things just quite instinctively really, so whether it's right or wrong I don't know. But...they came out with a tune which went [singing C C C C D D B $\flat$ ]: *Mirror, mirror, mirror, mirror on the wall*, so they went up on that [singing the end D D B $\flat$ ] *on the wall*, so you know, they found the tune and...so it worked. And actually their piece I have got on video came out very well.

**Oscar** That day, after sending your students to work in the practice rooms, you waited for a while in the main room and you told me: 'I like them to search on their own'. Would you explain further this comment?

**Emma (17)** Yes. I think it is important, like I said before that I don't get in the way too much, that I am just there if they need me. And certainly, I found that the last two weeks much more the kids have been coming up to me and going – because I've said 'right, we're videoing them next week': 'Oh can you come and help me, can you come?'; and I go: 'Yes I come and see you next'...and 'can you come and help us?'. And that is great. So they know I would come and help them when they need me, and I also think it's important that I am not on their back straight away. What I did before I said that was I popped round to every room

and went: 'Are you OK, have you got everything you need?. And THEN I came to the classroom, so I made sure that they all had what they needed, that all their equipment was working, that everything was there. Then we went to the classroom and I said: 'I am just going to let them be for ten minutes, just to get on with their own thing. That was really for them just to have an experiment on their own, see if they could, because quite often at that point a lot of the groups will just move on their own without any help from me. And I think that – I hate that word at the moment because it's very fashionable – it empowers them, if they are doing that for themselves and I am not seeing to be... and it's theirs, then it is theirs and, you know, they know straight away if I put too much input into it, they are very aware it is not their piece if I am pushing too much in. I think it is important that they do that on their own, certainly, and then I'll have a look around and go around again and go: 'Everything OK, don't you need anything? Just pop in and then a little bit later go in and say: 'OK, can I hear what have you got so far now?' And then it may be that they have got absolutely nothing and that's fine, I don't think that we have to be in this place where 'it has to happen'. It is very easy in education, I think, to think 'right you have got an hour, it's got to be done in an hour'. It is a bit sort of business orientated, you know, 'this is your time you MUST finish it in this time, this is the time you have'. And I think if you put that pressure on it just everyone gets tense, and if you are tense you don't produce what you want. So it's trying to find that sort of thing in between where there is a feeling, hopefully, that they can be relaxed as well and quite often they might be talking about make up and hair and the ideas come out of that because they are actually – I know it sounds weird – but because they are actually relaxed, something will come out of it. Whereas if they are trying too hard and they get stuck, then they will continue to be stuck I think. So yes, that's my logic behind that.

**Oscar** Would you say that the students follow some process when composing?

**Emma (18)** Well, I do give them a very vague and rough...I mean it was interesting to watch me at the beginning because I couldn't believe how fast I spoke, and I gave them all those alternatives in sort of one long *blablabla*, I didn't write them on the board, I didn't give them overheads and I think that something that happens when you have been teaching for a while because when I first started teaching everything was written down, everybody had worksheets, and I remember going to my first teaching practice and being utterly stunned and amazed that the two music teachers who were very modern - they had been teaching for fifteen years each - had everything in their heads and never had a single worksheet or a single anything. They were just so intuitive and they could do that. I think what happens is that, it was actually very interesting to see that like that, because I realised that probably a lot of them didn't get it, because I spoke so quickly and just when 'you could do this, you could do this, you could do this, you could do that'. And I went 'oh my Goodness me, how did they get anything?' But then there is a part of me that knows that at that point looking round the room, at least 45%...no at least 75% of them were not engaged, and I think if I put it on the board, or put it in an overhead, or put it...and so on, they still would not have been engaged which means that we would not have got in the practice rooms. So I think the reason that I was speaking so fast was 'get it over with, get them in the practice rooms' then I can talk to them in small groups, and they will respond better to me in those small groups, and in that way I can then approach each small group – and I am getting back to the question – in their individual way, because they will need different instructions and different ways of getting into it. But I did tend to say: 'Right, we'll start with the chorus, we'll start with the words, once you have got the words let's have the beat, talk your words to the beat with a pulse, you know with a...

**Oscar** A pattern...?

**Emma (19)** A pattern, yes... I've forgotten the word...with a metre...



**Oscar** All right.

**Emma (20)** ...with a metre we call it. So they were almost like rapped but not rapped, so you knew where they went and then put the tune in but I didn't want to sort of lay that, I think probably I spoke so fast because I didn't actually want to lay that on every group and wanted to make it as a suggestion rather than the law. There are so many different ways that you can song-write, you can do the chords first, you can do the tune first, you can do the rhythm first, you can do the words first, so I think I did keep it quite open but when I went into groups I would sort of see, try and see which was the best way to get into that particular group.

**Oscar** The way you are teaching composition now is different of what you did...three years ago?

**Emma (21)** I think probably as I got more confident about teaching and me as a musician and a teacher...I don't know, I think I've always felt quite confident about composition as far as 'contemporary / pop / blues' whatever. I feel very confident that there isn't a correct way to do it, that there are many ways of opening the doors. So, in that respect I think I've always done it like this, actually. In my other school more so, because it was not so formal, the school wasn't so formal, I could actually be informal, and I feel I am very informal in this setting. I know that there are other settings where I am more formal, but I do think it is important to be quite informal when I'm doing this sort of work.

**Oscar** Would you try to describe the process of the students when composing, not the process of you teaching, but their process. Did you see they had anything in common?

**Emma (22)** Emm...OK. Generally, I would say about eighty or ninety per cent of them get involved in some way or other. There are about ten per cent who don't get involved in this. Wait a second, I'm just trying to think...yes, may be ten per cent I would say, three or four in each class who just don't get involved in the process at all. And that is being honest, they just DON'T, they can't. They just don't, they can't and find the whole thing a little bit just too open may be, too unclear. Whereas a lot of them find it very very natural the process, I feel...from the outside looking in is that because they are seeped in the pop tradition in songs, because the majority of them are – not all of them – because I do notice not in this class but in Year 8 for instance, when I get my pop song book out and they all sing pop songs, that there is a couple of kids who are very musical, who have music lessons and all, who do not know any of the songs. Presumably, because at home the radio is always on classical music or Radio 4 and they don't hear popular music and they don't know pop music. So they may find that process, when they get to Year 9, more difficult. But a lot of the kids, how I see the process – and I'm keeping on the subject – is that they go with the process, they actually go with the process, there are areas of the process that they don't understand but they still go with them, so for instance, with the chords, with a lot of the groups, not all of groups, but I would say with sixty per cent of the groups, I'll come in and help them with the chords. So their process would be that they will follow the thing of doing the words, then they'll put a metre to the words and then they'll put a melody, the melody will come next generally, they won't think harmonically at all, but in the back of their minds you would be amazed of how many groups – because they had this harmonic structure in the head from the day they were born – will sing a melody that goes over I, VI, IV, V or I, IV, V. It would be there and I can just go in and slot the chords in, if they have that harmonic thing. And I would say that at least half, no more, three-quarters of the songs will fit into a very standard harmonic set up. The kids who are trying to be much more contemporary, sort of *jungle* thing, which doesn't have so much of a harmonic background, you'll know that. They'll know that. They don't want chords, they don't want chords that sound like The Beatles, they don't want that in their songs. They want discordant stuff, they...they know

what they want. So if I come in and I do something and it's not what they want they will say 'that's not what I wanted'. If it fits, basically to the standard harmonic structure, they know that's what it sounds right and they'll be like 'Oh, great, fantastic!'. That's taken it on a notch, let's carry on, let's do the order, let's dance or whatever. So, they follow that on through their knowledge, or the harmonic structure rules that are around us all the time in our lives, really...and I think I've lost the plot now...

**Oscar** Never mind...

**Emma (23)** ...structure, structure. Sorry, yes.

**Oscar** Do you have different backgrounds in your pupils, here, I mean, do they come from different...?

**Emma (24)** Oh yes. There is very very working class kids and there is kids who come from very nice middle class families who learn the violin... they are very different. So there is a real broad range and you don't see it because of the uniforms. And that's one of the things about the uniforms and about the strong rules in the school is that you don't know or notice when you look, that there are kids who come from quite, you know, quite poor backgrounds I would say. They have a long way to school, they have responsibilities with younger brothers and sisters, one-parent families, parents who died...you know, all sorts. It's not...It's very mixed.

**Oscar** Would you say that influence a bit their way of doing songs? [At the same time, in the practice room next to the interview a trumpeter is practising increasingly loud]

**Emma (25)** Yes, because a lot of them...there is a real mixture of kids who have already, by the age of thirteen, being completely indoctrinated by formal music training who actually find it more difficult, I think, to do this work than the kids who are still very orally based and...em...is that trumpet bothering you?

**Oscar** I hope I'll be able to transcribe this [laughs]...

**Emma (26)** It will be fine. [laughs] Yes, I hope so.

**Oscar** Let's watch the next extract...

**Emma (27)** OK.

*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract comes from the same music lesson. In the last extract we saw Emma helping a group in one of the practice rooms. She then moves onto the next practice room and here she works with another group. This is the group that finally will perform in the Year 9 Concert and the one that extract five focuses on. At this stage, a month before the concert, the first draft of the lyrics is almost finished and the melody and harmony begins to appear from the singing of predominantly two of the girls.*

**Oscar** What is your impression about this extract?

**Emma (28)** Well, goodness gracious me! I came in like a whirlwind, didn't I? That extract wasn't really six minutes, was it?

**Oscar** No...four and a half.

**Emma (29)** Four and a half...That almost goes against everything I said already, really, doesn't it, because I go in there and I just go: 'You should do that, you can do that'...actually no, I said: 'You could try to work something on that, you could try of doing something like that, this is what you've played', *poofth* [making the sound of a shutting door] and I am out, I'm out of there! You know?...I've just told everybody exactly what to do!...

**Oscar** Don't be that critical [laugh]

**Emma (30)** No I didn't actually tell everybody what to do but I made suggestions of what everybody could do and I was actually – that is probably the first bit – I was actually quite pleased with because it felt like I just pulled all their things together and then left, so they could just get on with it. In four and a half minutes I think it was pretty good, because I sorted out the chords, I sorted out what note they started on, and I don't believe I put anything in there that wasn't meant to be there, because they weren't phased by anything that I brought in, these ideas. I did feel a bit like the doctor, or somebody although I don't know...just going 'OK, what have you got for me, what have you got for me? Lovely! OK. Oh you've got tune, oh you've got words, lovely! Oh you've got beat as well, OK. Let me just *dadadada* [singing]. I'll fix this, fix this'...like a fashion designer or something. There was something about that feeling of just going in and almost like, not being a magician, much more sensible than that, a bit like those programmes you have on the telly when they go in and fix peoples' houses. You know, they have bits of old material and they come in and just put lick of paint on the walls and then the whole house is just renewed but is the same things they had in the house. Do you know those programmes, those decorating programmes?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Emma (31)** But I felt that was good. May be people would look at that and think that wasn't good or whatever, who knows...

**Oscar** May be you have this feeling because sometimes I cut and paste. To do a single extract I use two extracts and I look for the space of time when you talk, so...

**Emma (32)** Right, OK.

**Oscar** ...so may be you have the feeling that you talk a lot, but it wasn't like that.

**Emma (33)** No, I know, because I know that I don't spend very long in rooms. And the other reason is you don't have the luxury of being able to spend too long with them because you know you've got to move onto the next group, and every minute that you are with one group it means that other groups may be stuck and sitting there being stuck... I don't mind about other groups just getting on with it and that's fine. It's just like wanting to make sure and have my eyes open and just check and have a look through the window to see that they are OK. I think that's the worry when you're spending too much time with one group, but it's very valuable as well to spend a lot of time with one group and give them some concentrated time. But that group no I didn't give them that much time. I just went and sorted the little bits out and went away again, and everything else they did was just theirs, which is good. Which is how it should be really.

**Oscar** Did you guess then that they were going to perform in the final concert?

**Emma (34)** Strangely enough, no. And I don't know why. I think it's because may be after that lesson they got a bit stuck. Or I just got used to them or something because it was only on the last, a day before the concert I suddenly went [clicks fingers], but it was all very

last minute and most people had decided the week before and they'd come along, and they hadn't come along and I'd...I think I had it in my mind that I picked a lot of the same sort of personality of girls to come along, and they're all very quiet girls who were sort of well behaved quiet girls, and I wanted some more feisty girls in the concert because also it's very good for the whole profile of music as well, to get girls who are a bit more 'streety' and a bit more 'funky' to be in the concert and they were just the ones I thought of, and I got them to come along and sing their song and it was perfect. So, they hadn't been in my mind, I think it was because...is there another group?...there was another group in that class who performed...no there wasn't, no. That's why, so it was a mistake.

**Oscar** [Laugh] Would you say there are some common characteristics between the most creative students?

**Emma (35)** That's a really really difficult one to answer and I would say NO, at that point. Because there are so many ways of being creative and there are the kids who are very extrovert, who tend to get into trouble in lots of places within the curriculum, yes I would say there is a similarity there because a lot of the extroverts are very creative and what happens in a very formal music background is that they get pushed to one side because they may not be the kids who will concentrate on having private lessons, and because of their extrovertness they may get bored with things like that and the creativity doesn't really get a place to flourish, I think...perhaps in drama. But quite often they are very creative musically, artistically, and those are certainly the kids that I have my eye on because I know I was a bit like that myself and I found the formal side [expression of dislike]...but then I am not having anything against the kids who are very creative and introvert as well, which you do have both. So I would say that there are two types of creative personality, there's the extrovert, there's the introvert and they both have to be nurtured. That's my feeling. And it's very easy to miss one group either way. And that was the interesting thing about who I picked for the concert. It was very unusual for me to go for all the quiet groups and more introverted groups, than the feisty extroverts who tend to get disillusioned quickly, get bored quickly, you know, who have lots to say. Actually it was interesting that I'd gone for the other way, because I'm usually the one to pick up on the more extrovert kids.

**Oscar** How would you describe Francis' group?

**Emma (36)** O well, I would say that Francis was definitely more of the introverted type, but she is hanging out with a group of real extroverts. Certainly I would put them in the streetwise extrovert funky brigade. No doubt about it. And Tara, who was the tallest one of the girls, is a real...she just has the most incredible energy, which is very very magnetic. And I've told her, I said to her, you know, the only problem with her energy is that if she is negative she'll pull lots of people with her. But she has the most fantastic ability to be positive, and in the last piece we did she actually played bass guitar. She never played bass guitar before and she did a fantastic job of it, it was really really good. So those are the sort of kids I want to do GCSE.

**Oscar** Right. Do you think it's possible to teach to be creative?

**Emma (37)** Is it possible to TEACH to be creative... I think 'teach' is a funny word anyway. I think it's possible to create the environment to be creative and... I think it's more about environment than teaching, you see. I think creativity...yes you can be teaching techniques, but in the end...I think environment can teach creativity because I think a lot of our creativity is about 'feel', 'feeling'. And that environment can be taught I think, you can set up the right sort of feeling and mood and THAT can be taught, yes that can be taught. But I think more it's about opening doors, creating... – I'm talking rubbish now, sorry [laughs].

Yes, I think the environment can be taught, you can educate. I think 'educate' is probably a better word or 'enlighten'.

**Oscar** So, how would you describe your role as a teacher?

**Emma (38)** Well, I'm an educator, and I'm a facilitator and I'm also...a nurturer and I'm an 'inspirer', hopefully, I'm an inspiration. And I am a role model and I'm hopefully someone that people want to spend time with. You know: 'I like going to music because it's good to spend time with Ms. [her surname]', you know it's a good environment. I'm creating an environment where creativity can happen. It's bit like that old analogy with the soil, you can't have lovely flowers if you don't water the soil, and I think I'm more like the gardener looking after the beds, just making sure that they are watered regularly and that I put the seeds in at the right times and then I don't just leave them, I do come back and water them regularly and talk to the flowers as well. You know, in whatever way. Humour is incredibly important, I think, and being relaxed. And I think that was the problem last half term. I got very tense at times because there was so much pressure. I don't like concerts myself.

**Oscar** Would you describe yourself as creative?

**Emma (39)** Yes.

**Oscar** Did you have any training on composition or improvisation?

**Emma (40)** Any training...? I gave up music at school at the age of thirteen. I stopped music because I had to choose between music and art and I chose art. I had no training of composition and improvisation until I was thirty-one years old. And before that all my training had been making music, like being in a situation where I just did it, and wrote songs. I wrote songs for about twelve years. I use to improvise when I was a kid, you know, I mean we all...I think I use to make up songs all the time and improvise over songs that I knew already. So, when someone described to me 'vocalise' when I was at jazz school when I was thirty - about how you move the words around in the song - I just I'd been doing it all my life really. So training... I have to say that the training I had for a year when I did the jazz course actually really hindered my creativity afterwards, and I found it really difficult to get back to that place of writing songs and creating, because I'd been given so much technique, so many rules that it just...it almost destroyed it for me. I then got into teaching because I couldn't write songs any more, I really couldn't. Fortunately, because of teaching, because you went back to really basics with teaching, you were talking about simplicity, repetition, you know, very simple things, I think that helped me get back. And I think actually having to put myself into a situation where I was attempting to teach people how to make up, or compose simple things, helped me to get back to a place where I could write songs myself, compose myself.

**Oscar** So, would you say that your pupils help your own creativity?

**Emma (41)** Oh yes, yes, definitely. Yes, I get a lot from them. Just as much from them, a lot from them. And it should be like that, because I suppose in a way, I don't feel like I'm a teacher. I just feel like I am a SENIOR learner, which is what Keith Swanwick says, but I do feel...

**Oscar** [Laugh]

**Emma (42)** ...very much that I nicked up from Keith Swanwick, I think...and he nicked it from someone else. But I'm definitely a senior learner and the teaching just happens to be the fact that I'm older than they are. But I forget they are kids all the time and, you know,

and the best times I have is when we're sort of making music together. And I think that is how it works, at least for me.

**Oscar** Let's watch the next one...

**Emma (43)** Oh, there's more, hooray!!

**Oscar** Two more... [laugh]

**Emma (44)** Two more!?!...

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract is taken two weeks later with the same Year 9 class. This lesson follows a similar structure, including a first period of singing and a second period of song composition. The pictures presented in this extract are from the second period of the lesson. The pupils, grouped in four practice rooms, work on their songs with the supervision of Emma.*

**Oscar** Right. What is your immediate response to this extract?

**Emma (45)** Oh... my hair was looking gorgeous! I'd just been to the hairdressers. That's all I was interested in actually. Lovely, yes. Em...my immediate response was my hair.

**Oscar** [Laughs]

**Emma (46)** My second immediate response was...

**Oscar** I mean what do you think about the four groups?

**Emma (47)** You mean how they're getting on, and things like that? You mean about them? About what they are doing and how creative they are being? Things like that you mean?...

**Oscar** Would you say some of these are better than others?

**Emma (48)** Oh yes, but I wouldn't say that. Certainly not...

**Oscar** Not to me...

**Emma (49)** [Laughs] It depends who you're going to tell. They all have things that are working in them. Each group I think had something that was working very well. I couldn't say that there was one group where wasn't at least one key member of the group who was keeping it together, and I think that is another thing, in the group thing, is that you just need one person, I think. But then you need somebody to spread the good news as well. Because there was someone in each group that I knew had something. So, they may've been taking a more major part in the group, and I don't think that was a problem either because there wasn't any...I didn't see any group where anybody was overpowering anybody else with their ideas. It was just that somebody naturally was coming up with ideas, more ideas than other people. And OK, so it may mean that some other people in the group were sitting back. That's my only thing, I would say that there were certain groups where other people were feeling insecure and so they're just sitting back, not actually participating. But a lot of that it's about their questioning skills and I've noticed that there are some students who are very good at questioning other kids. And I think that's probably something that I would, in the future, like to try and give them more skills at. Because that is a very important skill, is them

asking each other, talking to each other which, I mean they're better than boys, but there's still a lot of work to be done with how they question each other and how they get each other going. Because there're some groups who were encouraging each other, saying 'oh that's great, that was really good what you did', you know, 'she is such a great singer' or 'what about this idea' and things like that, where there was other groups where there was one girl who had some great ideas, she was doing 'rappy' type thing and I was playing the keyboard. She had a lot of input in that group and they were several people in that group who were just not participating, because they didn't think they had anything worth participating, I think, more than anything else, I think. That would be my reaction. That's not my immediate reaction, I have to say, because 'my hair'...

**Oscar** [Laugh]

**Emma (50)** ...But that would be my immediate reaction. There was good things going on in every group, but there were people in the group who needed pulling out more, who could have contributed something more to the group.

**Oscar** How do you assess, how do you evaluate the work of your students?

**Emma (51)** Well, it's a difficult one. With the group work, they do actually get a group mark, It's evaluated as a whole group. But then, there is room within that evaluation to give some members an extra star or whatever. If you feel they've participated more, I would tend to be...it's very difficult. I don't like giving people grades or marks. But it's , you know, it's part of what we have to do. I would rather give them...the evaluation that, for me, is important is, they watch it back on a video and THEY evaluate it and they talk about it. We have really good discussions about what worked?, what didn't work?, if had more time what would you do?, how did the mood come over?, what was the hook?, or where were the successful moments?, if you had three pounds and you had to buy one of those on singles which one would you buy?, why?. Those sort of questions, so making it more of an analysis rather than a grading them, giving them eight out of ten or fifteen out of ten. But there are, we do have criterias about how we mark things and they are clear, and I usually ask them to grade it first. They get the chance, and they tell me why they gave themselves that grade. And then I tell them why I've given them a grade. And I think that's very important that they are involved in that process, for me, it's really important. Because there's no point in giving them the grade if they don't understand why.

**Oscar** Do you have like grading sheets...

**Emma (52)** Yeah.

**Oscar** ...for creativity?

**Emma (53)** Creativity?...booh... There is something within the grades system that talks about mood, about taking ideas on, about developing ideas. There's lots of talk of that within our criteria. Creativity...not per se, not as a word, no.

**Oscar** May be what's included in the National Curriculum...they talk about 'Creative skills: composing and improvising' ...do you grade composing?

**Emma (54)** Oh yes, yes. We do have a criteria, I can't tell you what it is off the top of my head but we have it in the department, you could get it.

**Oscar** Right. May be we should watch the last one.

**Emma (55)** Yes. Go on.

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: The group of girls we saw in the third extract is going to perform at the 'St Valentine's Day Year 9 Concert'. Pupils from different Year 9 classes, school ensembles and choirs take part in the event. All parents and pupils are invited to the concert. The extract shows different bits of the groups' work, arranged with the intention of giving a feeling of continuity. This collection of short extracts is taken from the last lesson before the concert and from the concert itself. We see the girls finishing the songs' arrangements on their own. Then they sing on stage during the last rehearsal, and we finally see the end of their performance during the concert.*

**Oscar** In the first bit, they work on their own - I think you are in the main room. Would you try to describe their decision-making in there?

**Emma (56)** I thought it was fantastic actually. Because they were all working just like I would expect to see a group of adults working together or any sort of band. The way that they were reacting to each other, they were talking to each other, even the ones who weren't saying anything were involved because every moment within that, everybody was doing something. Whether they were just nodding, the body language was there, that they were involved. The first bit Tara was writing on the board, everybody was involved in some way in trying out percussion things, trying different things out. And then when they went through it the second time both Francis and Tara were both talking as the music went on about decisions that were made, and other members of the group were nodding. I was really, really delighted to see that happening. Because, you know, I'd like to show videos like that to groups to say this is how a group should work together, this is an ideal group situation. Because, you know, they were moving forward all the time, I think, having looked at the piece from the beginning to the end. It was very harmonious the way they worked together. And it developed, and it could have gone a lot further, you know. And I think that's the other thing you'd say, 'well where would they go from now?'. There was a real excitement, I felt, from hearing it in the classroom and then at the first rehearsal, it was a real sort of...uauh! It's in a new place, it's in a big place, it's like changing the venue.

**Oscar** Now a difficult one. What would be your definition of creativity?

**Emma (57)** My definition of creativity, mm... Creativity is such a huge thing. There are so many things that one can do creatively. I think it's more to do with a type of awareness, that you do it with, rather than what you are doing. You can peel a carrot creatively, you can make a meal creatively and it's all to do with, I think, to do with a certain type of awareness. An actual being in the moment that makes something creative, rather than doing it unconsciously. If it's done consciously, and you are absolutely there, in the moment, then that's creation, as far as I'm concerned. I mean, they do say the most creative thing you can do is give birth. I'm not so sure about that. But I believe that, that yes, creativity is a state of being, where you are in the moment. And I feel that, when I see that, the reason I'm excited is because they are TOTALLY engaged with the NOW. They're not thinking about, for those moments they were not thinking about the make up, or the boy or the hair, or the whatever. They were totally in that process, doing it, and that for me is what creativity is all about.

**Oscar** Would you say motivation is an important piece in this?

**Emma (58)** Motivation...I think you become motivated, you are motivated if you are in the moment. They sort of go together, you can't say 'oh that person is very motivated'. Because I think, if it sparked off somehow, the being in the moment, the being in the



process. The motivation is just there. Because I've talked before about sparks [clapping her fingers], when they get the spark [clapping her fingers] and they are in the moment, the motivation it's just there. It's not something separate, I don't think.

**Oscar** Right. I wanted to ask how do you motivate your pupils. I don't know...

**Emma (59)** I suppose the motivation, I mean, I tend to try and be enthusiastic, but not too over-enthusiastic. I think in the old days I probably was more, but I think you have to pace yourself a lot more. I think relax. I think if one is relaxed, and excited about something, which again comes back to being absolutely there with it, to being in the moment, I think then the motivation will come. If you can just come in, if you can just somehow get them engaged, somehow trap their attention into something, I think. And I think my job really is just to sort of start the spark going, get their attention, I think, to NOW, rather than, you know...I mean I do it all the time in classes where I just go 'Ann Louise, where are you, come on, back, back', you know, 'come back, come back' because they've drifted off, they've gone off, they are in planet... And I know exactly when a kid is off. And when I'm in my good moments I will pick them out, off, you know, one at a time, I'd just go 'right Louise, come back, come back, you want to be here. I want you here now'. Because if they are here now, it'll all happen. It's a bit too esoteric really, but it's true [laugh].

**Oscar** Right. In your lessons I observed many different activities: singing, composing, listening...Would you explain how do you work with your curriculum, your schemes of work. Do you consider it important to mix different kinds of things...?

**Emma (60)** Yes. We do dancing as well. We do movement, we move around and dance, and I think it's very important to do as many types of different medium as possible. Different styles, different ways of getting into music. Some pieces of music will get into, as I said, moving around the classroom. Some pieces of music will...[the interview is interrupted by another teacher who comes into the room and asks a question to Emma. They talk for two minutes and I stop the tape recorder]

[After the interruption]

**Emma (61)** You have to ask me the question again.

**Oscar** Yes. The question was...would you explain further you curriculum and your schemes of work for Key Stage 3?

**Emma (62)** OK. We keep changing them. Every year they get changed. Every year I am unsatisfied, every since I've been here. And I say, I'm not sure about this, I'm not sure about that. My main aim is that they have a musical experience, and I think [the Head of Music] is in agreement on that one. But it's not about their work, it's about the experience, it's about the doing, it's about the fact that everybody in the community feels as if they are a musician, that they are involved in a musical experience and not excluded. So, there is a lot of music making. So, a lot of the schemes, the way that things are put together, we are always rethinking how can we get into this so that it is a musical experience the kids are doing, the kids are IN the experience, rather than feeling like outsiders. Do you want me to go into details about the schemes? You can have a...

**Oscar** No. I think I've got them. I like you to summarise the kinds of music activities going on in the school, outside and inside the regular timetable. What sort of things...

**Emma (63)** What things I am involved in?

Oscar

Yes.

**Emma (64)** Well, I'm involved in the a cappella group, which is Year 9 and above. I did have an a cappella group last year, and then it was decided that the main choir was getting too big, because they were about ninety in the main choir and there were lots of people talking and getting on our nerves. So we decided to make it into a junior choir and a senior a cappella or chamber choir, with the idea that the a cappella choir was much more open to anyone because it was more accessible music. More world music, more global, folk, gospel, African, learning by ear pieces that could be learned fairly quickly. Having said that, Do-Do-Ron-Ron which we did at the concert was fairly complicated, really - I wouldn't mind seeing all of the video of the concert, actually. And so that is my main area at the moment. I used to run folk group, a folk group happens. I have a lot of struggle with the fact that there are a lot of quite...the ensemble things are just for people who tend to be having lessons, and I want there to be more things off the timetable that are more like 'dropping sing along DJ', things that more kids could be involved in, who weren't taking lessons. Because there is that emphasis, this feeling that if a kid isn't having lessons it means they are not interested in music. When actually quite a lot of them are. And those are the kids I'm interested in. They are interested in music. They are just not interested in sitting in a room with one person, you know, learning an instrument. They want to be doing music that's 'doing music', rather than, you know... You can't play in the wind band until you are grade two, which means you have to sit in a room on your own for three years, playing on your own, before you are allowed to participate with other people. And that's my big flag, really. I want people to be able to participate from day one, on a musical experience. And I think it's trying to put that into a reality, because it's all very well, it's very nebulous to be thinking like that. But actually to put it into practice it's another thing all together. In the schemes, we do a composition project every half term, with every group in Key Stage 3. We do a concert a every year, from Year 7 to 9, so they all get a chance to participate. Again, I have reservations about the concert, because I'm not sure how musical experience it is, for a group of kids to get up, stand up, sing five songs, watch lots of other formal groups do things and then go home. I don't actually think that's going to inspire them to go on to do more musical things. So I actually disagree with the concert at the moment, because as a way of involving kids in a creative experience. I don't think it's creative, very creative at all, actually. I think there is an idea of 'oh yes, how great that they've all been involved in a public performance' but, so what?. For me I am not sure if that's such a great thing and wouldn't it be better if they had somebody coming in and doing a big workshop with them, where they're all actually actively participating all day in African drumming, in, you know, dancing or something that they're actually much more hands on, than standing on a hot stage for an hour and a quarter and singing five songs. So that's...I've lots of reservations about different areas within the curriculum - and that wasn't the question anyway [laugh]. But, yes, because of the background I have, because I wasn't involved in anything musical at school, apart from the choir, I feel quite strongly about the fact that I don't want people left out of things because they're not good instrumentalists or formal instrumentalists, I should say. So, that's my little thing that comes out of its box every so often and shouts and then goes back in and keeps nice and quiet for a while. And [the Head of Music] is incredibly open to all of this, so we do really well. I think we have a very creative relationship within the department, because we are all very open about change and about trying different things, and about creativity, and music-making and being involved in a musical experience. I think there is a lot of room for things to move and grow, and develop.

Oscar

Would you summarise again what would be the aim of this (out of time table) activity you are in charge of?

**Emma (65)** I was watching the video and I was thinking it gives them an opportunity to be involved in a music making process that a lot of people would say 'uh it's only pop', you know, 'it shouldn't be doing that in schools'. But actually, I think it's demystifying the whole thing of 'oh those people on the television can do it, they are so special, we can't do it'. When in fact what we're doing is, again, empowering them and seeing that they are absolutely capable - all of them in fact, are capable of producing a fine pop song. And lots of them are absolutely very fine. I could hear them, if they were produced properly, they would be on top of the pops, you know, a very fine pop song. And that they are all capable of a good standard of music making, and that they can all be musicians. I think that's one of the things in the project, is demystification, empowerment and just being involved in a really quite immediate type of collaborative, you know, collaborative art form – voila!

**Oscar** Thanks. How do you view the National Curriculum for music, and its attainment targets?

**Emma (66)** Well, these days with glasses because my eyes' sight is getting quite bad...

**Oscar** [Laugh]

**Emma (67)** ...I used to do it without. I try not to view it at all, really, if possible. I did used to look at it a lot when I was studying, and learnt it off-by-heart and things. So really, no, I try not to look at it, if the truth be known.

**Oscar** Another question was if you feel confident with these activities, but I think it's quite obvious...How do you feel?

**Emma (68)** Oh yes, totally. Totally confident, yes.

**Oscar** Would you have selected different extracts from your lessons to comment on?

**Emma (69)** No. I think that was a fair selection, yes. It was good. It was very interesting for me to see. And to see the areas where I was happy with the process and not so happy with the process. But generally yes, it was good. Yes.

**Oscar** How do you assess their songs - because you need to give them a mark, or a grade, don't you?

**Emma (70)** Yes.

**Oscar** So well, you ask first to the students. But if you think differently, is it tricky to give them a mark?

**Emma (71)** It is tricky and it's one of the things I absolutely loathe and despise about this job is grading things. Because that all goes back to that idea of public examinations, and you know, distinction or whatever, and 'oh I've got a hundred and thirty two marks, uh!' and all that business, which I find quite despicable really. So, I try to be very clear about the fact we have to do this, it's part of what we have to do. It's part of the process, the guidelines are very strict, the criteria of whether you get a nine or a ten, you know. The five or the six is, you know, 'you've done what you've been ask to do'. All the aspects are there, there's a good beat, there's a tune, etc. Seven or eight you've extended it. There are extensions, there're extra ideas, you may have put a hook in, you may've added some backing vocals, you may be dance in there. Nine and ten, which is the top mark, you get...there is a real sense of style. That's where we get to this sense of style, there is a sense of, you know, the

ideas have developed on and they know. They can tell which ones are just like basic, 'yes you've done what you've been asked to, great'. And then the ones that do, the ones you go out and buy it. I mean that idea of saying which one of these would you go out and buy it, why, what is it about it. I think that almost covers it, really. It's that extra something, there's an extra little something that you can't put in words almost. And I think there has to be room for something that you can't put into words myself, you know, that aesthetic-NESS of a piece. Whether it be a piece of pop music or something that just makes you go 'oh yes, wow!'. And it doesn't have to be because of the major seventh at the end of the third line, or the sustained fourth or the whatever. There's just some magic has been captured, and that is within the nine and ten categories, certainly. For me.

**Oscar** All right. Would you like to add anything else?

**Emma (72)** No [laugh].

**Oscar** [Laugh] Thank you, thank you very much...

**Emma (73)** You are very welcome [laughs]

**Oscar** ...for everything.

[End of recording]

## INTERVIEW WITH LAURA

*Context and description of the first video extract: This extract is taken from a Year 9 unit focused on the programme music genre. This is the third lesson of the unit. At this stage the pupils have chosen a scene from a film and have analysed the relationships between action and music. In this extract from the beginning of the lesson, Laura revises the homework from last week with the students. Two pupils present scenes they have chosen from two different films. They give a short explanation to the class, describing the interaction of the music with the action going on in the chosen scene.*

**Oscar** Did you recognise the teacher?

**Laura (1)** Yes. [Laugh]...Just about, it was those clothes...

**Oscar** Could you try to describe what were you doing in that lesson? That was the first week I came. I think it was the third lesson in the unit, more or less...

**Laura (2)** That wasn't the last one of the unit. That was one of the first lessons for the programme music. And so, before they started their compositions they were actually looking at extracts of film that used music in a way, so we gave them examples and we also looked at their examples, from their home work.

**Oscar** And, what was the lesson plan for the unit, more or less?

**Laura (3)** For the unit or for the lesson?

**Oscar** Yes, for the whole unit.

**Laura (4)** For the whole unit, they were to compose a piece of music that would suit a particular film, scenes of a particular film.

**Oscar** And how many lessons had, more or less, the unit?

**Laura (5)** They had about six...six to seven. So the first couple of lessons was more of an input onto looking at particular films and genres, from our resources and from theirs, and then they would start their own compositions, on a film that we gave them, divided into six scenes, and in each particular scene they had to come up with the music to suit the action that they saw.

**Oscar** Right, that was the easy one. Could we watch the next extract?...the next one.

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson as the first extract. After the pupils' presentations, Laura divides the class into six groups and explains the tasks to be done in the next stage. At the end of the unit pupils will need to complete the music for six scenes of a film chosen by Laura (Walt Disney's 'Fantasia'). Laura gives a scene from the film to each group, and asks pupils to write down the main action features they want to reflect in their compositions.*

**Oscar** Could you try to describe what were you doing in this part of the lesson?

**Laura (6)** They had to go into their small groups and try and arrange a sequence of events, musical events, that would suit their particular scene.

**Oscar** And could you describe what's your role as a teacher, when you work with composition activities?

**Laura (7)** Just by prompting them for what they could do...I mean, that really was, you know, a prompt. We gave them information, we gave them the actual film, and we put them in a groups that they had to work in a particular scene. So, if anything, we just sort of described in much detail what action was going on. And they had to imitate that action through their music. And whatever they came up with, was their own musical ideas, which is apparent in the next extract, rather than me telling them 'use this scale, use this particular ostinato', it was just more of a 'let us just see what they come up with'. We didn't give them any particular tools to use.

**Oscar** When teaching how to compose, do you follow a particular process...always?

**Laura (8)** Not for each composition project, no. For this one, for example, they weren't given a particular melody or particular set of instruments, you know. It was very much more freer. And if anything, this has been the most free composition that they do in Year 9.

**Oscar** Right. Would you say the students follow some process when composing, some processes?

**Laura (9)** Yes, we wanted them to follow a particular structure, they had a particular time to do it in. And in that time I didn't want to be...you know, to turn it into a ternary form or rondo form, that could be a particular structure, if I wanted them to use a structure. Again, we just gave them prompts, and then, afterwards, they would be aware of 'oh yes we did do that with dynamics' or 'we did do that with the tempo'. I think we needed to explore it more.

**Oscar** And, from your experience with Key Stage 3, would you say they...when they do these activities they do it differently? I mean, is the process different between pupils?

**Laura (10)** Is the process different between pupils? If they are in a particular group or if they are on their own...?

**Oscar** Em...anywhere. You give them the same prompts, all of them...

**Laura (11)** Yes, they all had a different scene. They all had different features that they had to come up with in their music. And according to their instrument, I wanted to them to explore it...you know, a relationship amongst themselves. So, it may've been different if say...if I said 'look I just want you to use your voices and the use of keyboard functions'. So I think the process is affected by what they are given, and how much feeding we give them, and the environment they could do that in.

**Oscar** OK, let's watch the next one.

*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract is taken from the same Year 9 unit on the programme music genre. It is the fourth lesson of the unit. The pupils watch for a second time the scenes from Walt Disney's 'Fantasia' and write down the main features*

*taking place in the action. When they finish this task, they choose the instruments they would like to perform the music for the scenes. Laura sends them to separate areas to work on their compositions.*

**Oscar** That same day when we went to the practice rooms, you mentioned that you didn't mind other teachers' complaints about noise, because your pupils needed to work on their own, in separate rooms. Can you expand on that comment please?

**Laura (12)** They weren't in rooms, they were in different areas...I mean, the resources in this school do not cater for composition and performance at National Curriculum level. So, you know, in order to do that they cannot possibly do that exercise as a whole workshop, you know. So we have to create areas, and in so doing they are gonna be doing something outside English room, I'm not gonna hinder what they are going to do, just because we don't have enough space. So, you know, we are a nuisance, but you know...The classes aren't interrupted, because, you know, we are sensitive about it and they won't make a complete racket, we hope. But they have to have an environment where they're just working, you know. It's just a sensitive mature thing to do, otherwise how on earth can they come up with their own musical ideas, you know, with other distractions?

**Oscar** I think next extract they go to the rooms. But, in this one, they seem they choose the instruments they want. Did you give them instructions about instruments, or...what were you doing in this lesson?

**Laura (13)** Well, they had an idea, their prompts were what three significant features they had to do to come up with their music. Say you know, if it was marching and...and I did emphasise that it didn't matter what instrument you had, is what how you played it, what you made use of it musically. So, somebody with a steel pan could do several effects with it. I just wanted to make sure that there was a balance of instruments and timbres. And I know some of them needed some prompts, you know, if they're doing a marching effect, they could even use their own bodies. You know, to do that bit... I just, you know, they are interested to...I just help them, you know...if they wanted to check you know 'miss should I take chime bars with this or should I take the xylophone?' and I said 'what kind of, what are you gonna try an effect, what are you going to try to create with that?'. So, I said take both and see which one is better.

**Oscar** It was quite free...

**Laura (14)** It was very free, yes. As I said it was very free.

[Conscious of the time, because Laura had a class after the interview, I decided to watch the remaining two extracts together]

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson as the third extract. It comes from the second half of the fourth lesson of the unit. After the pupils watch the scenes from the film, they go to separate rooms to work on their own compositions. Four of the groups working with Laura's supervision are shown in this extract. Laura gives them different advice, depending on how far they have got in composing the music for their scene.*

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: At the end of the unit, some weeks later, the pupils' compositions have been recorded on tape. In this extract, the recordings are played along with the pictures. The pupils observe the resultant effect and Laura marks their compositions, watching from the back of the classroom.*

**Oscar** Could you tell me your impressions of these extracts?

**Laura (15)** Of what the students came up with?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Laura (16)** I thought that they had a short amount of time to prepare that before I came round to hear what their progress was so far. And em...I was quite surprised that some groups, a lot of them had different musical ideas, it was just trying to agree, and the others were quite passive and accepting of what they were given, from the other students in the group. So those kinds of relationships... I thought, you know, they worked quite positively together. They weren't put in their friendship groups, apart from one or two, they had to. I wanted just to make sure that there was a balance, that all six scenes were quite balanced out with the number of students, but...Yes, I thought they worked quite positively, I thought it was quite a good exercise. I thought the next one would be just as good, but...[laugh]. And they were satisfied as well, with what they came up, with their ideas. You could tell that the time was so short, you know, that it was time to come back then.

**Oscar** Considering all your Year 9 pupils, would you say there are more common characteristics between the more creative students?

**Laura (17)** What are the common characteristics of the creative students, is that what you're asking me...?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Laura (18)** ...Gosh!

**Oscar** But...watching this extract, for example Mattias' group...is Mattias?

**Laura (19)** Mattias, yes, yes.

**Oscar** ...Had a complex structure, introduction, a clear melody, harmony at the piano...

**Laura (20)** The last group we saw?

**Oscar** Yes the last one...

**Laura (21)** Yes.

**Oscar** ...and some effects with percussion instruments. I mean, they work differently, they had an extract and they came up with quite rich music in [clapping my fingers] fifteen minutes!

**Laura (22)** Yes. With that lesson...in effect that's what I was really impressed with, what they came up with in such a short amount of time. I wanted them to be more musically em... freer rather than talking, you know... 'here's the instruments, here's what you've got to



try and do', just to go with the flow. I know that sounds a bit open-minded and a bit idealistic, but it was...Oh, you know, and that would work in their confidence. In that last group that we saw there were some particular personalities in the group that encourage the students who weren't as good as those students, that whatever they were able to do was going to be accepted. And that was very clear in that, in that group, because they were not differentiated, according to ability. It was to work with...in a friendship capacity. I know some of the students were looking at the other students, who they felt were more able to give them ideas...you could see that. But whatever they did was fine, was great.

**Oscar** Would you say that their background influences their musical outcome, in this group and others?

**Laura (23)** Yes, absolutely. Every child comes in with something, you know, they all come from...there is a high, a very high mix of different cultures represented in the group, even though our school is known for mainly Turkish and, half of the school are Turkish, and you know, there're other cultures represented. There is a high Somali group represented...And so, I felt that, you know, every student in the class does have something to offer, whether they've got access to instruments at home or not. Some of them...you know, I know on each register if the child has got instruments at home, you know, if the child plays music outside or inside the school, and you would be surprised that some of the students are very able, actually, have no particular music interest outside. But they can come up with the goods in the lesson. One particular student, one Albanian student, you know fitted that sort of criteria, whereas when he is in improvising he's quite creative, quite confident, but he doesn't come from musical background, you know, his family, or he doesn't play instruments at home, but he loves singing and...so. Some of the cultures are much more richer in music than others, I think. When the students go home, some of them are more...have got more access to music that's around them, compared to music that is with the youth. So, for example, the Turkish community. There is a lot of members of the family, you know they are going to community services at the weekend, always playing, always singing. You know, that is a particular culture that the music is much more richer and valued outside the classroom. And say, the Somali community for example, the students who play the music in the lesson, I know, that they wouldn't have a richer musical experience compared with some of the other children in the class. So, yes, going back to the question, you know, their background does have a big, a very large effect on what they bring, and what they come out with.

**Oscar** Would you say their background influences their motivation?

**Laura (24)** Yes, yes, going back to the students who 'yeah let's just play, let's just go!', they are much more confident, those students...it's obvious that they're doing music outside the lesson.

**Oscar** So how do you equal their different motivations?

**Laura (25)** Well, through encouragement and making sure that they feel, they can perform and they can create. May be not in front of the whole group, but in their small groups, which some of the Somali children you saw do, didn't you?

**Oscar** [Trying to understand Laura's question, I spend more time than usual to respond] ...Yeah.

**Laura (26)** [Laugh]

**Oscar** Em...how did you assess their compositions?

**Laura (27)** There was the criteria and there were grades. We graded their performance, their ability to perform on their instrument, and we graded their level of contribution to the creative process. So, some students made more of an effort onto what they wanted to do in the music, and guided the other pupils into what to do, and they could've played a particular instrument that, you know...say for example, one particular student was leading in the group, but that person was playing just, you know, the triangle and the cymbals, just some metal timbres sounding, but that person had much more of an input in gathering other students to create, and compose the music. So that student was individually assessed with a number. And what we've done this week, is they've all been, had to give, had to grade their own performances, A to D, A being the top, D being fair to unsatisfactory, according to the performance on their instruments...

**Oscar** Themselves?

**Laura (28)** ...themselves, and then they also had to do their own, they had to do same idea then with their composition, did they feel that they had a creative input?, did they feel that they gave themselves those compositional ideas, or was it somebody else?. And then we had number one at the top, number four being 'I was the passive student, I let actually the other students tell me what to do', but they gave themselves a number three. And then, when they gave themselves their own grade, and they had to swap with somebody else in their group, and then I gave them their grade and if I agreed or disagreed. And so far, we've done like two thirds of the groups, they have more or less agreed. You know, it hasn't been sort of outbalanced, so...they are giving themselves a C, being too modest, you know, they're actually being quite sensible about it. We didn't make it too formal really, quite informal, and then to discuss in their groups, rather than filling out the charts and boxes [laugh].

**Oscar** Do you think it's possible to teach to be creative?

**Laura (29)** I think it's possible to give them an environment, as in you know, free space for them to do it, give them time on their own, without teacher input, allow them to use their music...because you could tell that some of them were using motives from other artists - In one particular group, that was evident - and the motivation...Yes.

**Oscar** Would you describe yourself as creative?

**Laura (30)** Yes.

**Oscar** Did you have training in composition or improvisation in your career?

**Laura (31)** Yeah. My background or my degree was very much composition based. And that was my choice, rather than performance, recital, analysis. I'm much more into composition, and studio work...so that's my background, everything on that side.

**Oscar** So...do you feel confident with these kind of activities?

**Laura (32)** Yes...because, I think, from what they do in the classroom they feel confident that they can take their musical compositions, and perform it not just to each other, but to assemblies, and that's why a great part of the music ethos, if you'd say, it's to share their own compositions, in a public area, whether it's showing it amongst assemblies or going the outside into the communities. And that confidence is built and stemmed from the classroom. That's from the other music teachers as well.

**Oscar** How many music teachers, full-time, do you have in the department?

**Laura (33)** Two full-time, one part-time. It is now being cut due to [the Council] pressure to increase the class size to thirty! So, you've got thirty children in the classroom, one music teacher was not able to have her contract reinstated, so there are two music teachers now, teaching thirty children in the classroom. Whereas before it was twenty...it's a lot. So we've lost that third member. As with other departments...so it's a battle...

**Oscar** Cut spending...

**Laura (34)** Yes, it's a battle, it's to find space in this school, and it's, you know, for them to, like you say feel free to come and create and do their own music. And if you ask the child, what does a child want to do in music, which...if you give them that offer, 'if were to do this project again, how would you change it?', which is part of their evaluation they've had to do this week, not only grade themselves, but they'd say, you know, for the next group what do you think we should do to make it, I don't know, more fun or change it. And they would say 'different instruments, a different film, more time'. A lot of them said they wanted more time. I gave them too much of a short time. So, those was the main outcome of that. They enjoyed that project they did. They liked the idea that they were free to come up with their own ideas, but they wanted more time, and they wanted different instruments.

**Oscar** Right. Before we started the interview I saw some kids upstairs, playing with a good DJ stereo...

**Laura (35)** Oh right, yes. That's another extra-curricular activity.

**Oscar** Would you try to summarise the kinds of music activities going on in the school, in the regular timetable and outside the regular timetable?

**Laura (36)** Well, all the extra-curricular activities are all outside of timetable. They're all in lunchtimes and after school. And the one that you saw was the latest one, which is...was only set up, it was set up last year. It's a core group of MC DJ equipment. The girls weren't there because all the girls which normally do come were all on the removal room, what you just saw there. They had to go due to an incident. But yes, there is a core group, and we've actually just got a bid to get some new decks and equipment for that. It's the most fast growing popular music club, nation-wide. They want to know how to do the...we had a visiting artist come last year, and it was such a huge, you know, we had to really limit the numbers. So we knew that's something that the students want. So that's one, and another one is the Turkish choir, which is not made up with just Turkish students, they do Turkish and Kurdish songs, and it's made up for children mainly Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9...

**Oscar** Are you in charge of that?

**Laura (37)** No, I'm not in charge of that. Another lady comes in from [another school] because she works with the refugees, in the school. But, you know, we are actually performing in a Turkish radio next week, so I'll be with them. We also take the school Soul choir, along with, so that's three...The other one is the Turkish instrumental group, which is on after school again, and that's 'saddes and baboucas', and the School Band and the Steel Band.

**Oscar** Sorry, 'saddes and baboucas', would you...?

**Laura (38)** 'Saddes and baboucas' are Turkish instruments. So, because there's such, the large Turkish community in the school we had to do something to reflect that.

**Oscar** Do they bring their instruments?

**Laura (39)** Yes, they do. And we also got a bid from an outside agency to promote the music from certain cultural groups in the school. That's...we have no money FROM the school, we got this money from outside, and that's from a different agency, and that was for the steel pans as well.

**Oscar** So it's like a music charity or...?

**Laura (40)** Yes, it's a grammar fund.

**Oscar** Em...I've got some questions about the schemes of work for Key Stage 3. How do you view the National Curriculum for Music?

**Laura (41)** You can't do everything they are guiding you to do in the time that we have...and the class sizes that we have. It's evident, we asked the children 'what do you think?'. You know, a lot of them wanted more time, on that particular project, and they feel that, you know, it's constrained into making sure they do this, that and the other. So we make sure that they get as much performing and composing on a practical basis, because they only have it an hour a week, and as you see, a lot of them overspill, and come in and do extra-curricular activities. And also, important links with primary school...local primary schools do not have any music resources, so upper school play a big a role in sharing the resources we have with Year 5 and Year 6, and with a special needs unit very close here, secondary school children. We again have an exchange partnership with that school to share music skills with their students, to be integrated and so...

**Oscar** And you have quite a lot of computers upstairs, keyboards...

**Laura (42)** That's all we have, that's all quite recent. So, yes, it's quite recent...

**Oscar** Is it from another bid?

**Laura (43)** No, no, that's not from an outside bid. We have actually that as a, you know, to promote ICT in the school. So we've been able to get from the school. But you can tell that all the other departments have got new Macs, and we've got the old ones [laugh].

**Oscar** Oh...right [laugh]. What activities do you practice in your lessons to achieve the attainment targets on composing skills, of the National Curriculum...? I saw this unit in, with the Walt Disney's Fantasia...

**Laura (44)** What composition activities do we give them? I'm quite happy to give you a copy of all the schemes of work. They've got all the titles for what...

**Oscar** I can copy that?

**Laura (45)** ...all their projects. Is that OK?

**Oscar** Yes, yes.

**Laura (46)** You know, because that includes using different artists and background...to see the influence, and try and use...try and compose in particular style, particular genre. Whereas this one was very much their own, if you noticed.

**Oscar** What would be your definition of creativity?

**Laura (47)** [Thinking for a long pause]...Key words, as in...Strong form of expression, and the ability to tap into what you can share, in a creative environment... To be motivated, to be expressive, and to have the tools to do that.

**Oscar** Would you have selected any different extracts from the lessons to make comments?

**Laura (48)** ...Sorry?

**Oscar** Would you have cut and pasted any different extracts from your lessons?

**Laura (49)** Oh, if I was to do that unit again what would I change? No. No em...I think, you know, the time they had to rehearse, would've been nice if we just sort of gave them a tape recorder, so they could listen to their process...

**Oscar** Yes.

**Laura (50)** Rather than me coming around tape recording them, and asking them questions. I found that I was being intrusive. Because when I came in I felt that, they felt that they had to perform that...I just should have sort of just give them the tape recorder. But we don't have those resources, but we should get those little tape recorders in each area, so they could just...

**Oscar** You would like to put one tape recorder in each practice room?

**Laura (51)** Well, in that situation, they don't all have a private practice room, so they would all have to carry a dictaphone around with them.

**Oscar** Would you like to add anything else?

**Laura (52)** It was the first time we did that project. It was the first time we did that project 'Programme Music', in that way.

**Oscar** You did it with a couple of more year nines, did you?

**Laura (53)** We didn't do it with a particular film. We've done it with paintings, we've done it with poems, we've done it with pictures, but we haven't done it with action.

**Oscar** But, this same year, when you were teaching these lessons with another group, how did it go?

**Laura (54)** Yes, I felt that the outcome in another group was very successful, because they actually, not only they did in their groups but, as a whole workshop, all of us, including myself, we all improvised and...according to what was going on in the scene. So I would just delegate, and say right 'your turn, your turn'. And that was a nice environment and they all felt they could do that.

**Oscar** Because, at the beginning we chose this one [Year 9], because we thought that the...well, it would be nice to see them at work. And now, you find that may be other groups were...

**Laura (55)** Yes, I chose this group, yes. The outcome was not as high as another group, say for example. But you can't predict that, you can't predict that. You know, some groups have really surprised us, and some of the children themselves have been surprised at how

well they've done. And at this stage of the game in Year 9, they are choosing their options. And to keep them motivated, you know, making sure that they can still do their music, because some of them will not be taking certain subjects, and that's one of the reasons why sometimes things go downhill in Year 9, with other subjects which they're not gonna continue. So, you just have to keep reinforcing, you know, reinforcing to the child that...and the Key Stage 3, all these levels that have been introduced, you want to come away with a good, with a good particular grade, a good mark. And music here is just one hour a week, and those children, you know, if they haven't taken it, it's still part of their, quite a big part of their life, they still come to the MC Club or the Turkish group.

**Oscar** Is it free the MC Club and the...do they pay for...?

**Laura (56)** All of them are, yes. All of them are free.

**Oscar** Right. Do you have instrumental tuition?

**Laura (57)** Yes. That is not...[laugh]. Yeah, the numbers are really limited, due to the constraints a teacher can't do, you know, over a certain amount of hours. It's a bit of a battle we have, supply and demand.

**Oscar** OK, thanks you very much for you time.

**Laura (58)** Thank you very much Oscar, and the class, I know, I though were very excited to have...to be chosen, so I'd really like them, possibly to show part of that video, especially their process when we were in the rehearsal room? That particular extract...

**Oscar** I'll give you a copy. I can't give you this because this is an original. I like to keep the tape with all the other participants.

**Laura (59)** I understand, yes.

**Oscar** I'll send you a copy. Thanks very much.

**Laura (60)** Thank you.

[End of interview]

## INTERVIEW WITH HELEN

*Context and description of the first video extract: The extracts with Helen are taken from a Year 7 project on composing a Rondo with a given structure (i.e. ABACDAEA) and a given chromatic melody for 'A' (i.e. C E♭ E♮ G F♯ D C). This extract is taken from the first lesson of the unit. Helen explains the project and gives pupils some instructions. She explains the structure of the Rondo and the initial melody for 'A'. She asks pupils to use any of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale they wish to compose the remaining parts of the Rondo.*

**Oscar** What were you doing in that first lesson?

**Helen (1)** I tried to set up, so they understood all the sections and how to put together a rondo form. To sort of...to start to understand what a rondo was, and for them to start to learn to play the section A.

**Oscar** After that extract, I think you send some pupils to practice rooms. When teaching composition do you consider any specific classroom setting to work?

**Helen (2)** With year sevens I tend to put them in groups...let them put themselves into groups that they are happy with. And then, if it's a group project, and then we'd put them into spaces where they can actually, hopefully hear each other, rather than lots of groups together, you know I mean...?

**Oscar** Does the physical environment influences pupils' outcomes?

**Helen (3)** I think it can do if you end up you've not got any practice rooms, and you've got them all together, because they can't hear each other. But, they seem quite happy working in practice rooms, and quite happy in the classroom. If you've devised it up enough, so you've got enough space to actually hear...yes.

**Oscar** Could you try to summarise what were your lessons plans for the whole rondo unit?

**Helen (4)** OK. First of all was to introduce it, to give them an idea of what we were doing. Then, we had them working on learning section A. Then start to think about the other sections and building up solos and talking about improvisation, and how to do improvisation. And then, try to put it together afterwards. And then a performance at the end, but then there'd be, sort of, you know, each lesson reinforce what a rondo is, what a semitone is, sort of...the keywords. And a bit of listening, as well.

**Oscar** That was the first lesson of the unit, was it?

**Helen (5)** Yeah.

**Oscar** Right. Let's watch the second extract...

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson as the previous extract. It includes two short extracts. Firstly a group of pupils rehearses the initial 'A' tune given by Helen. She then explains to all pupils how to make up the solo part. Later on, Helen works with a group of girls in a practice room. They play the rondo structure with some of their solos and she comments on the piece with them.*

- Oscar** What is your immediate response to this extract?
- Helen (6)** [Laugh]...I don't know...They seemed to be bringing it together quite well. They had their ideas and they were...they had ideas and they didn't quite like mine either. Which was quite interesting. Because when you are there, you are kind of keep thinking 'well, that would work', but they clearly weren't, you know, they were debating it quite well.
- Oscar** Can you try to describe what you were doing in this part of the lesson?
- Helen (7)** The end part of the extract, or...?
- Oscar** Yeah...
- Helen (8)** Well, with the girls, with that group, I was trying to get them all to come together, so they were actually listening to each other. Because they were further on than some of the other groups. So actually enabling them to start to think about how their tunes fitted together. So, that they weren't just coming with an idea on their own and practising their own little bit, but actually working as a group more...but earlier on in the extract, some of them were still at the point of trying to play section A together, and they kept to doing it wrong. So it was more trying to encourage them to keep practising, keep going at it.
- Oscar** Because the girls in...at the end of the extract, almost finished the rondo with solos on the first day...
- Helen (9)** Yes.
- Oscar** Would you comment on their work for this unit?
- Helen (10)** Do you mean at the end, or...?
- Oscar** Yeah...on the whole unit.
- Helen (11)** On the whole...They seem to pick up the ideas quite quickly, but I wanted them to develop them a bit more, because they clearly had the ability to do that. Some of the other groups, at the end managed to just put the tune and an idea together, and they just got there. But this group I wanted them to try other ideas, and they managed to. You know, they worked well together and they played the solos together and...so the section A together, and it all fit quite well.
- Oscar** And at the end, what happened with these girls?
- Helen (12)** They performed it quite well, from what I remember.
- Oscar** Do you follow some process when teaching how to compose? Do you have some standard set of activities, or...how do you do it?
- Helen (13)** We don't have anything set up to sort of say, you know, in your second week we would do this or whatever. I try to encourage them...they took from this, you know, they took my notes, and they played around with the notes I've given them. So, I think that was a good base for some, most of them to start with, and then those who could advance, sort of push them further with that. First of all we talked about how they can, you know, to play around with ideas, to experiment and take what they like from it, and abandon what they don't... We don't have a set system for that.



**Oscar** Right. When I first came to the school, in one of our conversations, you said that in a school you worked at before, you didn't teach with a similar structured way, in some units...

**Helen (14)** Right, yes...

**Oscar** Could you expand on that comment, please?

**Helen (15)** Em...some of the composition work, so I was saying, some of the composition work is quite structured. In the sense of 'we are composing a rondo and you've got this section to compose with it'. I'd done it where they had a bit more of freedom in the way that they were to write it. So, you come out with quite a different outcome, because the students had more...they're enabled to try more things out for themselves. But, I find the structure can work quite well for a lot of the students. Because they know, like the structure of the rondo, and they know they've got two bars for that part of the tune. Especially at Year 7, that allows them to...to work quite well.

**Oscar** That day, after the videotape, I wrote down that...well, a comment of you. You said, you told me that you 'let them stay a moment in the rooms on their own', after sending them. Could you further explain your comment?

**Helen (16)** Right. So when I sent them to the practice rooms I left them for a bit, so...

**Oscar** Yes, you sent them there, and I remember you waited for a while and you told me 'Oh I like them to stay...'

**Helen (17)** Yes. I usually send them off and let them settle themselves down and work out where they're up to with things, before I go in. Because I find that if you go straight into a practice room you end up sort of saying 'Right you sit down, and you do this, and you do that' and it just takes them a few minutes to actually get to the point of sitting down and working through what they have got to do, and getting their brains in gear to the point where they can start. And also, so, that they can practice out the section A, so that when I go in they've had a go, and I can go in and help them rather than going in and sort of telling them, dictating what to do, straight away. Does that make sense?

**Oscar** Yes. Can we watch the next one?

**Helen (18)** Yeah.

*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract is taken a week and a half later, from a lesson with the same Year 7 class. Helen advises the pupils on how to compose their tunes and sends them to the practice rooms. In the practice rooms we can see a group of boys still rehearsing the tune given in the first lesson with Helen. In the next room, the group of girls from the second extract play the rondo, including solos, and they ask Helen some questions.*

**Oscar** What's your impression about this extract?

**Helen (19)** I don't know [laugh]... They seem to have moved quite a way on, but then I went to that group of boys, and they couldn't play the tune...and that was a bit soul-destroying.

**Oscar** Well, obviously you have different pupils in your class...

**Helen (20)** Yes, yes.

**Oscar** ...different...you don't select pupils in this school before they come in. What would be your definition of creativity?

**Helen (21)** Mm...I really don't know...being able to explore ideas and come up with their own, within a structure that they feel comfortable with. And, I suppose if you are creative you can take something that you've got already and develop it further, as well, to make it your own. So, you could be creative by just playing a piece of music, because you put your own interpretation on it in a way that you would do that. So you start to put dynamics in, flute-wise, change breathe marks and things like that, and you just actually put feeling into it. And that's creative as well, that's creating...building your own, composing your own, I think.

**Oscar** Would you say that some of your pupils are more creative than others?

**Helen (22)** Yes...[laugh] I think they are coming from different bases, so, those boys, it takes them longer to get to the point of being creative. But they'll...I think some find it quite easy to approach 'doing something'. Others would find it quite difficult to start, or to develop an idea. They can cope with you giving them an idea but can't take it any further...

**Oscar** Right...

**Helen (23)** Yeah...I think so.

**Oscar** And, could you describe some of...I mean...do you see some common individual characteristics between the most creative students?

**Helen (24)** Sometimes you pick out the musicians, so people who already play instruments. So they have knowledge of what you are talking about before you start. I don't know about the others, the non-musicians, they seem to...they come up with ideas and develop them further, or they'll try something and like it, and keep it, or they'll be looking for something specific in what they are playing, whereas some students will just go in and hit any notes, and whatever comes out they'll say 'oh well I've done that'. But the more creative ones will try and change what they've done. Although that...the group of girls seems to be more, one or two seem to be more creative, but they are not willing to change their ideas, they've got it and they're set with it. So, I don't know, I think that's quite hard...

**Oscar** Do you think it's possible to teach them to be creative?

**Helen (25)** I think you can give them ideas to develop. So, if you are doing a composition, you can give them a structure to start with, or give them ideas when they're composing to develop their ideas. You sort of see it in GCSE groups, that they get better, because they have more of an idea of how to create music in a frame that musicians would be happy with. So I think in that sense you can, but there does seem to be something, you know, some students you can give them lots of ideas, but they're still not quite sure, how to develop them. And you talk about development and, you know, inverting ideas and things like that, but they still don't seem to be able to make it musical, in a sense that we would see.

**Oscar** Would you describe yourself as creative?

**Helen (26)** [Laugh] That's a horrible question [laughs]...I think I can be. I don't know...yes, I suppose. As a teacher I'm creative in a different sense, because I'm not

coming up with the ideas initially, but actually looking at how we can extend students' ideas. So actually looking at that would...is different creativity, I find. And it's quite different from composing on your own, composing your own ideas. Because you can't go in with a set idea of how it's gonna come out, 'cause it never does, because the students have changed it. I mean, the rondo you can, you can see a picture, but GCSE classes...so, I say a certain idea and it comes out completely different, and that's fine, as long as it fits.

**Oscar** Did you have any specific training on composition or improvisation in your career?

**Helen (27)** I did harmony, when I did my BA, and I've done GCSE composition. but A level I didn't. And then on my PGCE we played around with improvisation, but only, it was only twentieth century improvisation, to try and get the sort of classically set of people into improvising ideas. But we didn't discuss, sort of big ideas and how to go about composing.

**Oscar** All right. In your pupils in this class, and all the classes, would you say that the pupils follow some procedures when composing...some processes?

**Helen (28)** I think there are processes within each scheme, so composing the rondo has a sort of set structure as to how they would do it. Particularly in Year 9, you know, we start by doing chords sequences, so they have structures as to how to go about that, and then hopefully they bring that when you sort of point it out into the next thing, and then they improvise, and they hopefully they bring that into the jazz, so they start to understand how one idea links to another, and how to develop it further. So I suppose, in that sense yes. There isn't a set kind of 'we do that in Year 7 and teach them how to do that' and then in Year 8...but I think every scheme has it, in it, if that make sense.

**Oscar** And is the process sometimes different between pupils?

**Helen (29)** Yeah. Because, like the boys who couldn't play the tune, it's gonna take them a different way to get to the point, that we've got. There's also limited time. If it takes them that long to learn the tune, then, they've got less time to be...to compose.

**Oscar** So what...how would you describe your role as a teacher with the pupils and their compositions in this unit?

**Helen (30)** I think it's enabling them to do it, it's enabling... Well, I think teaching, especially those boys, teaching them how to play the tune. Some of them can play it, you know, on their own, but you'd have to sit down and go through it. And then, enabling them to compose something that they are happy with, and enabling them to put it together. Because that was the hardest thing, I think. It wasn't the composing, that took them quite a short time, it's actually making it all fit together, in a logical sequence, and making...working out the gaps and putting all these sections together. I think the teacher's role is enabling rather than composing for them or... You need to give them a structure, but they need to be creative, I think.

**Oscar** In that unit you work different...many different skills, doing the rondo activity. I really enjoy that because it was not only composing or playing, it was, as you said, playing together, four different startings, they needed to be aware of what was going on...

**Helen (31)** Yes.

**Oscar** ...what timing...

**Helen (32)** It took some doing that bit, I must say [laughs].

**Oscar** I found the pupils very articulate, very...you know they asked questions and I really enjoyed that.

**Helen (33)** That's good. Thank you.

**Oscar** Well, let's watch the next one.

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract is taken from the last lesson of the project. Helen has written the criteria of assessment of the pupils' compositions on the board and explains it to the class. They are going to perform and tape-record their compositions in front of the whole group. She asks them to write down their assessment of their fellow pupils' tunes.*

**Oscar** Can you try to describe what were you doing in this part of the lesson?

**Helen (34)** I'm trying to give them an idea of how they are going to be assessed. And also, I wanted them to start to think about what other groups had done and how they could have improved. So, they know what the marks are, and they are getting an idea of appraising, starting to pick out problems or 'good things', 'bad things', from what they've heard.

**Oscar** Were they going to mark themselves, or all the other mates in the class?

**Helen (35)** They were gonna mark the other groups. So that, ideally if we had enough time we could then go through each group and give them an idea of what they could have done to improve it. So I try to do that, if I've got time, as we go along. But the year sevens seemed very rushed at the end of last term.

**Oscar** How do you assess the compositions of your students?

**Helen (36)** Make sure I've got the assessment criteria first. So, on this one, it was looking at how they'd put it together, I think...it was, I'm trying to think...yeah, we're looking at how, whether the whole thing fit together really well, and then changed, looking at it from there, that point of view. But it does depend on what they've been doing and what the focuses ended up being. With the rondo it did...if it wasn't together it didn't work, so that was as important as the actual composition part of it.

**Oscar** Right. I remember some criteria written on the board...

**Helen (37)** Yes, that bit [not understandable] [laughs]

**Oscar** All right. Now I'll show you some videotaped performances from the last lesson, and I'd like you to comment on them after the...

**Helen (38)** OK.

**Oscar** I think there's four, or three...

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: This extract is taken from the last lesson of the project. The pupils, sitting in groups, perform their compositions in front of the whole class. At the same time, they record the performances with a microphone and a tape-*

*recorder. A boy introduces each group by saying the names of its members at the microphone at the beginning of each recording, and then bringing the microphone to the appropriate area of the classroom, holding it close to the performers. Three group performances of the rondos and two single solos played by different pupils are included in this extract.*

**Oscar** Any comments, please?

**Helen (39)** Do I have to go through each group?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Helen (40)** Yes. The first and the second group, I thought they'd brought it together quite well, and their tunes seem to fit into the...the tonality really, you know, it all fit together quite well, and each tune worked on from the previous one. So, I thought they worked quite...I was quite happy with those. The third one, it was very bitty, so I would have got them to, if I had more time, to actually spend more time making get them do it together, but I think they were a bit pressured because of playing in front of the friends as well. But then, their ideas, the composition that they'd done, didn't fit in, together with the ideas...with the main theme, which made it feel really disjointed, anyway. But, we'd kept the thirds in, because I remember them working on the thirds, and that was quite...quite different. And I wanted to talk about that but we ran out of time, so... And then the final two, were girls who'd got a bit further and they'd come up with their own, and I ask them as an extension thing, to have a go at coming up with their own tune, because they'd done that bit of composition, still using chromatics. They were short, because of the time, but they were quite memorable. And that was one thing I was trying to get them to do, come up with something memorable. Because I think that makes a good tune.

**Oscar** So those two girls did the group task the week before?

**Helen (41)** Yes, they'd done that, yes. They were moving on to something else, I thought we would experiment with that, because the others were so, you know, behind.

**Oscar** I remember videotaping the third group, the boys with the...

**Helen (42)** Yeah, in the practice room.

**Oscar** ...'Star Wars' thing, at the end.

**Helen (43)** Yes [laugh].

**Oscar** And they did it maybe better in the practice room, than in the main room.

**Helen (44)** Yes, I think there was pressure of their friends.

**Oscar** Maybe the microphone...or me videotaping them.

**Helen (45)** Yes. Yes, the other thing I try to do is try to get them to perform to each other, because a lot of them are very shy, so...and if you have done it in a practice room with one, then they all expect it. So, yes, I agree.

**Oscar** How do you motivate your pupils when working with creativity?

**Helen (46)** How do I what, sorry?

**Oscar** How do you motivate, how do you engage them?

**Helen (47)** Yes.

**Oscar** Because they did seem to be having fun...

**Helen (48)** Yes [laugh].

**Oscar** I really like this group. I don't know if the other groups you have are like this...

**Helen (49)** Some of them are, some of there aren't [laugh]. I don't know, I think 'be enthusiastic', when you are doing a project. And this...the year sevens are quite different to motivate to the older groups. The year sevens are very much 'can we play on the keyboard?' and they if they can they're very happy. And they will usually play anything, as well, where as soon as you get higher in the school they all sort of turn their nose up at things if you are playing something that's classical, you know, that they wouldn't listen to. So, I think, enthusiasm a lot of the time, and the younger ones, it's kind of...it's encouragement as they go along, as well. You know, when they know what they've done is good, then they'll carry on. So it's trying to get around more, to actually saying 'yes you are doing fine, keep going', which a lot of this, you know, right at the beginning it's more or less what you have to do as well.

**Oscar** Did you have these pupils in year six?

**Helen (50)** No, because they start in Year 7 here. So it's also Year 7 it's working out what they can do... which it takes a little while. And some of those won't have done music in Primary school at all, and some of them will have done it all their school life, so you're sort of fighting against that as well, trying to get that balance it's quite difficult.

**Oscar** Would you say that some of these students playing in this extract were more creative than others?

**Helen (51)** I found that group more creative, yes.

**Oscar** Which one?

**Helen (52)** Well, as a whole, the tutor group. Those girls were very creative, I think. The boys were finding it harder. There were one or two who weren't developing ideas. Like one boy...he would come up with one idea and that's it. So, I don't find that creative, because they won't experiment, they found that quite hard.

**Oscar** Would you have selected any different extracts maybe, from the lessons, to make comments?

**Helen (53)** I don't know, I think that's quite representative, because you know, sort of...the students who couldn't play the tune and the more advanced group as well, and... maybe one in between.

**Oscar** We don't have enough time [laugh].

**Helen (54)** [Laughs]

**Oscar** No, I had difficulties to cut and paste these lessons, because I had a...maybe four or five tapes, and I found it quite...I mean, lots of bits interesting to put in for the interview and, I needed to choose, so I put these ones at the end. Mm...that's a difficult one: how do you view the National Curriculum for music and its attainment targets, including those related with composing and improvising?

**Helen (55)** [Laugh of surprise] How do I view them? Mm...they are incredibly wide. And I think, any music teacher could do many projects that would work and fit in with that. And I think if a music...if somebody wasn't happy with composing, they could end up doing an awful lot of performing, and sort of get away with it. There isn't a lot of guidelines as to how the students should be composing, so you kind of fall back on what you know, rather than having a universal, you know, 'all music teachers will teach this way', doesn't seem to have that at all, so you could very much do as much as you wanted, I think. And that's what other people do as well. I mean two pages isn't much, is it, for three years of work?

**Oscar** What activities do you practice in your lessons to attain the objectives on 'Creating and developing musical ideas', apart from this rondo?

**Helen (56)** Oh, what other projects do we do?

**Oscar** Yes, in composing and improvising...

**Helen (57)** There's...we did timbres, we look at how they can use different instruments to create. In Year 7 we use menu cards, so they've got a set up structure, so they, you know, they got a menu of how they're composing. But I didn't, I was off ill last year, so I didn't actually teach that one last year.

**Oscar** Menu cards? Do you mean like a restaurant...a menu?

**Helen (58)** Yes, similar to that, so they got a set way of doing it, and they decide what is going where and things like that. But I haven't actually got into that much, yet. And then we've got...Year 9 is a big one for improvising, because we do jazz, we do reggae, we do an improvising...a whole project on improvising. Mm...I'm trying to think in Year 8 what do we do...we do African music, samba, the blues...we did contrast and repetition, so that was more composing...

**Oscar** Within a given style or...?

**Helen (59)** ...I'm trying to remember [laugh]. Yes, it was...I can't remember the style it was actually set...[laugh]

**Oscar** Doesn't matter. Do you feel confident with this, with all these kinds of activities?

**Helen (60)** Yes. I do sometimes think composing I wish I'd studied it further, to be able to bring more ideas in. But I can, you know, I'm quite happy to do it. I think if I got to A level I'd have to study a bit more first. But, yes, I think at this stage it's good. And the performing isn't a problem. So yes, I think so.

**Oscar** Do you perform an instrument?

**Helen (61)** Yes. Flute is my instrument.

**Oscar** Do you teach privately...flute?

**Helen (62)** Yes. I've got just three pupils, but yes.

**Oscar** Can you try to summarise the kinds of activities, the music activities going on in and out of the school regular timetable?

**Helen (63)** Outside of the classroom?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Helen (64)** There are groups for every instrument group, so there is a woodwind group, a brass group, strings, guitar...The students set up their own pop bands, as well, which we'll support with and if they want help, we'll go in and help them. But the majority of the time they are picking things that they enjoy and they are composing in their own style as well. There's also the musical every two years, that the students can go along and play with, and all the concerts that go on.

**Oscar** Sorry, you said the musical ever two years...?

**Helen (65)** Yes. There is a play one year, and then they do a musical the next year. So we'll bring in musicians to do that, and...we were going to do a musical this year, but the students didn't like what we choose [laugh] so it kind of collapsed, but, that ended up doing singing class lessons for students who wouldn't normally sing, and then they would've had to be on stage in March. But it was changed to a play, so...that was unfortunate [laugh].

**Oscar** Do they play the music in the musical?

**Helen (66)** We'd bring musicians in to play in the band, and then anybody on stage would have to sing, even if they wouldn't normally.

**Oscar** That would be at the end of June or...?

**Helen (67)** It was March...

**Oscar** March.

**Helen (68)** Yes.

**Oscar** Can you summarise the music activities going on in the regular timetable?

**Helen (69)** Mm...I'm not sure what you mean?

**Oscar** In Key Stage three, the schemes of work, do they follow the National Curriculum, or the Head of Department's ideas...?

**Helen (70)** I think they have been put together over the years by the Head of Department. They obviously they all fall in with the National Curriculum, the guidelines, and it's balanced out so there's, you know, performing projects, composing projects, and the listening and appraising seems...sort of fits in with whatever we are doing, so we try and bring that in all the time. They are taken from places as well, you know, a lot the ideas are from 'Music Matters' and things like that. And also, you know, whoever comes in...so I came in and wrote a samba scheme which hadn't been done before, so it fits in with music teachers specialities as well when they work [laughs].



**Oscar** I saw a big timetable outside, with instrumental tuition, and what else...choir, I think?

**Helen (71)** Yes, there are groups...anyone who has an instrumental lesson can have, would then come to a group. We try and encourage those who have them outside of school, to come to the groups as well. In the brass group there are one or two who don't have lessons who would come along, and then the choir is for anybody, so you don't have to have lessons to go to that. And there's a junk band, that you don't have to have lessons to go to. But the majority would be people who were learning already. It's trying to advance them further.

**Oscar** So can they start during Year 7, when they arrive to the school?

**Helen (72)** Yeah. They start instrumental lessons in Year 7. You can start at any point, but, as far as groups are concerned, you sort of wait 'til they're passed beginners' stage.

**Oscar** Do they pay for the lessons?

**Helen (73)** Yes. I don't think they pay for the groups, though. It's subsidised but yes, they have to pay.

**Oscar** Are you in charge of any activity outside the school...a choir or something?

**Helen (74)** I teach at the music centre in [town], so I would do flute choir there and a theory group, I'm doing a samba group at the moment, and individual students...

**Oscar** ...In the school?

**Helen (75)** That's based at a tertiary college, on a Saturday morning. What would I do...did you want to know what in the school?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Helen (76)** I do junk band, on a Thursday after school, and brass group and woodwind group. And I tried to set up recorders, but it fell apart [laughs]...they didn't want to do it.

**Oscar** And what are the aims of all these activities, for the school?

**Helen (77)** For the school or for the students?

**Oscar** ...for the pupils, yes.

**Helen (78)** For the students to give them an opportunity to play together, 'cause otherwise, they go to the lesson and go home and that would be it. And also to play with people of the same level, and to gain more knowledge of their instruments, so the string group they're picking up all the techniques they are working together on that. And performance opportunities as well, they would play in concerts that revolve around them, basically.

**Oscar** I really enjoyed to tape your lessons on this unit specially.

**Helen (79)** Thank you [laugh].

**Oscar** Would you like to add anything else? Anything you would like to...are you happy with the instruments and the facilities you have?

**Helen (80)** Yeah, we could do with more practice rooms, but I think anybody could, couldn't they?

**Oscar** Well, you have quite a lot! How many practice rooms you have?

**Helen (81)** We've got six, but then if you got two 'peris' in, that's four between sixty students, if you got two classes, happening. Which is why one of those lessons they were just like six groups in one room, which was quite, it was quite difficult to work with.

**Oscar** You needed to share the practice rooms with another lesson going on at the same time, maybe...

**Helen (82)** Yes. And that gets quite difficult, specially the older years. The younger ones can cope. So, yes, that would...I'd like that. And more headphones, would be nice [laugh].

**Oscar** Headphones...all right [laugh]. For the noise, when they play together?

**Helen (83)** Mm, yes. To be able to put double plugs in and them to be able to work together, because we don't have that, usually. The only way to work together is take the headphones out, and then it's, you know... But, no, the resources are really good. Yes.

**Oscar** Thanks very much...

**Helen (84)** Thank you.

**Oscar** ...for you time.

**Helen (85)** It's OK. That was useful [laugh].

[End of recording]

## INTERVIEW WITH ELAINE

*Context and description of the first video extract: This extract is taken from the second lesson of a unit on Jazz and Blues with a Year 9 group. During the first lesson of the unit the pupils were introduced to Jazz, and listened to music by Louis Armstrong. Now they move onto practical work, playing a tune with a blues structure given by the teacher. In this extract Elaine presents the tasks for today's session, explaining the structure of the piece and playing it through.*

**Oscar** Could you try to describe what you were doing at the beginning of that lesson?

**Elaine (1)** I was trying to, really, introduce them to the practicalities of the playing that they were going to do. So the nuts and bolts of playing it through. We had looked at it in the previous lesson, the first lesson before you joined us. Mm...I wanted to remind them of the tune, how it went, I wanted to remind them about how to set up the facilities of the keyboard, and for those who are more advanced than the others in the group, I wanted to provide them with something to go onto, once they'd mastered the tune.

**Oscar** Could you try to summarise your lesson plan for the whole unit, briefly?

**Elaine (2)** For the whole unit...?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Elaine (3)** ...or for that lesson?

**Oscar** Well...that lesson and the two more I saw of the unit.

**Elaine (4)** The whole unit was supposed to give them a sense of Jazz style, improvisation, characteristics of jazz - which they tried out for themselves in performing - and also responded to by listening to various bits that we heard in lessons that I don't think you were present in. To get them to improvise and develop a sort of freedom, away from the notes, and also to work with bits of notation, chord symbols... just to really kind of get a very, it may be quite a superficial understanding, but a sort of feel for jazz and some of the characteristics associated with it.

**Oscar** Right. When teaching improvisation do you consider any specific classroom setting to work with?

**Elaine (5)** In the lay out of the room?

**Oscar** Yeah...or in your use of extra rooms, or anything special.

**Elaine (6)** No...[thinking for a long pause]. I mean the rooms that they were using for practical work, they will use in any unit of work. Not specifically just because it's improvising.

**Oscar** Aha... Mm...let's watch the next one.

**Elaine (7)** [Laugh] Have I understood what you mean...?

**Oscar** Yeah...

**Elaine (8)** ...Do you think? Yes.

**Oscar** Yes.

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from a lesson within the unit on Jazz and Blues with the same Year 9 group, two weeks after the first extract. The pupils, grouped in pairs or individually, have worked on the music score given by the teacher and some of them start their solos. This extract of five and a half minutes contains three short video extracts. First we see Elaine observing and giving advice to two girls playing on a keyboard. Then she plays the solo part of the tune with another pupil (Lee), following a call and response structure. At the end of the extract Elaine observes a third pupil (Jason), who approaches the solo in a different way - quoting a melody from a dance song.*

**Oscar** What's your immediate response to this extract?

**Elaine (9)** [Thinking]...

**Oscar** ...Anything.

**Elaine (10)** Well... I feel that the set up of the lesson has allowed me to work quite individually with students, rather than in a whole class. So that, in doing that, and going around, and talking, and listening to what they've done, I'm able to know what they've understood and what they clearly haven't understood. With something like syncopation, who's quite a sophisticated concept, and it's hard, it's very hard to explain in words, and the only way you can see if they've really grasped it is to listen to what they've done. And not so much in that class, but in one of the other classes, you know, they thought they were syncopating it and they weren't. And so, I suppose...I think that's a good thing, that sort of individual contact. With Jason, I mean, he would just do exactly what he wants in any lesson, and as long as...and he loves playing the keyboard, so I, you know, I'd rather have him in the class doing something, than out of the class - which he has been during some of the year. So I try not to get too cross if he is not doing exactly what I've asked them to do. And what he was doing I felt was quite valid, so, I let him carry on with that.

**Oscar** He was enjoying it and...you've just said that he's a bit of a 'naughty' boy, but I didn't realise that when I was taping, he was...working!

**Elaine (11)** He wasn't too bad in the lessons, but there have been times when he's been removed from the class, because of his language and...he has tantrums. But he does like playing the keyboard, what he doesn't like doing is doing what I've asked him to do. So it's a bit of a compromise between us. The two girls at the beginning they work very well together as a pair, and they produced some quite nice work at the end of the unit. And...

**Oscar** There is an extract, later on, about these two girls.

**Elaine (12)** Yeah...So they were trying to do what I'd asked to do. They were trying to get to grips with doing a bit of improvising, and trying to syncopate the rhythms...so, OK.

**Oscar** Do you follow some process to teach how to improvise?

**Elaine (13)** In Year 8 we do a unit on Blues. And for that unit, when they do their improvisation using the Blues scale, I do give them a checklist of things. Because one of the things I've noticed when students improvise is they often get into a pattern, a rhythm pattern.

and they just repeat it over and over again. So, we have a check list of things like 'have some short notes and some long notes', 'use different pitches', 'repeat little patterns by sequence' and things like that. So I give them some material to work with, some ideas to work with. Some of them enjoy the freedom of improvising and others think it's too hard, because they don't know what to do, and like with that boy, Lee, he just need a few ideas feeding in, I think.

**Oscar** He seemed quite musical. He was able to imitate anything...

**Elaine (14)** He was able to copy, yes, which is quite a good sign. And sometimes, sometimes it's not their musicianship, it's their confidence, they just don't think they can do it sometimes, and really they can.

**Oscar** Would you say the students follow some process when improvising?

**Elaine (15)** Mm...a process of their own?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Elaine (16)** I don't know. I don't know if they do, or not.

**Oscar** Could you describe your role as a teacher with the pupils and their improvisations?

**Elaine (17)** My role as a teacher...?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Elaine (18)** To try to develop confidence in them in what they are doing so they'll have a go, and try things out. To try to get them to listen to what they produce, either by recording it or listening to it back on tape, which we do at the end of every unit - we will do that this week, listen back to what they've done, and evaluate it - and...and just really giving them ideas if they are stuck, or suggesting things if the improvisation sounds very random, and not particularly stylistic, I may suggest things that they can do. And demonstrating, really, demonstrating.

**Oscar** Right. Let's watch the number three...

*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract is taken from the second videotaped lesson (the fourth of the unit). Elaine gives some advice to the two girls from the previous extract. Then she goes away and the girls play the tune on their own with an extended call and response solo.*

**Oscar** What's your impression about this extract?

**Elaine (19)** I quite enjoyed that extract, because I felt they were very 'on task', they were really practising hard and using the time. I felt they had done some ideas for themselves, some of which worked very well, and they'd responded to advice that I gave them, and tried to incorporate it into their own improvisation when I'd gone. And then, I also thought that I am, in some ways, I might be dismissing their ideas by sort of, suggesting that other ideas are better. And I am aware of doing that, but then I suppose I'm trying to teach some sort of style and...

**Oscar** Right...

**Elaine (20)** I'm not dismissing them, I'm not dismissing their ideas, but sometimes, if I suggest a change, they themselves will say, oh yes, that sounds better...if you see what I mean.

**Oscar** Yeah. What is your definition of creativity?

**Elaine (21)** [Laugh]... Mm...I don't know, I'd need about a year to think about it. It has to be governed by some sense of control, I think; control of the medium they are using. And...what I am really teaching is a kind of received tradition, isn't it, I'm kind of passing on something that I've been taught, that's in within my experience, which is like an established tradition. And I'm hoping that they will be able to reproduce it on a simple level. And to do that they need all sorts of things: skills, practice-time and the ability to make decisions for themselves, and all those things come into 'being creative'. But, whether I am teaching creativity, I've no idea...

**Oscar** Would you say that some of your pupils are more creative than others?

**Elaine (22)** [Pause thinking]...Within a certain frame, yes. I mean, are you equating being creative with being musical?

**Oscar** Mm...no...I mean, I shouldn't equate it with anything. I'm looking at exploring the teachers' meaning...

**Elaine (23)** Right. Well...

**Oscar** ...the meaning teachers attach to the world.

**Elaine (24)** I mean you could argue that the boy that we said was naughty, is also very creative, in a way that is always out of the ordinary. And he is very creative in a kind of anarchic way, and... in that he would do things like listen to the tunes on his mobile phone, and reproduce them on the keyboard, and I think that's creative. I think that's quite a skill. And then, they'll be other students who will do exactly what I've asked them, and do it really, really well, and they are creative as well. And...am I getting myself into a bit of a muddle here? I don't know... I don't know, it's such a massive thing, isn't it, you'd have to really THINK about what it means. I mean, they are all creative, aren't they, but they haven't sort of got the same skill level to let it come out.

**Oscar** Right. Could you...with your best pupils in this group, and may be other groups, do you see any individual characteristics, common between the most brilliant students, or not?

**Elaine (25)** The most exceptional students will always adapt the task in a more individual way, they always will manage to do what I've asked them to do, but add on something or do it in a way which makes it individual to them. So they kind of stamp a personal mark on it. They are the most exceptional.

**Oscar** Would you describe yourself as creative?

**Elaine (26)** I hope so. I hope I can be creative in the way I teach. I think I'm creative in some of the ideas I've had, for work within school. And I suppose, I think of myself as being most creative if I am writing my own music, which has nothing to do with school

[laugh]...which I do do. And then I think I'm probably being the most creative, because I'm being the most me, rather than being in the role of the teacher.

**Oscar** Did you have any training in composition or improvisation?

**Elaine (27)** No...well, only in my degree, and that was a very traditional composition course, it wasn't very...you know, we didn't do original composition then. So, no.

**Oscar** At university?

**Elaine (28)** At university, yes.

**Oscar** Right. What was your degree on?

**Elaine (29)** What was it in?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Elaine (30)** Music.

**Oscar** Right...[silence]

**Elaine (31)** [Laugh] Is that what you meant?

**Oscar** Yeah, yes...but that information is for that sheet I gave you at the beginning, the 'Musical Career...

**Elaine (32)** Oh yes, yes.

**Oscar** I shouldn't ask degrees in the interview...I think we can watch the next one, number four.

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract is taken from the last lesson and was taped two weeks after extract number three. It is the beginning of the lesson and Elaine explains the criteria of assessment for the pupils' tunes, which are to be recorded onto tape later on in the lesson.*

**Oscar** Can you try to describe what you were doing in this part of the lesson?

**Elaine (33)** I wanted to share with them what the assessment criteria for the project was, so that they could try and place themselves on that grid, and decide what they needed to do and how high they were going to aim. I was trying to encourage them to aim high. And then I wanted to revise the syncopated thing, because as I said to you before, in another lesson, on the previous Friday, it had become quite clear that some kids hadn't really understood that, and I just wanted to see if I could make it clearer, before they went off to try and complete the task. I should also say that they have a gap of two weeks between each lesson, where, it's just the way the timetable falls; so there is quite a significant delay between the work they have done, and then the next time they come to it, which sometimes affects what they do... Anyway, so that was that.

**Oscar** Is with this group the two weeks delay?

**Elaine (34)** Yes. They have a lesson on the Monday, when you saw them, and then they don't have another lesson until a week on Friday. And then they have the Monday again. So they get two lessons, one on a Friday one on a Monday, then a gap of two weeks. And that's not ideal, because a lot of them need the time then, to pick up again from, you know...

**Oscar** How do you assess your pupils' improvisations, in this project for example?

**Elaine (35)** Well I would assess them to see if they'd got their syncopated first solo, and some idea of call and response in the second solo, and then, really depending on the quality and the style of how they improvise, would distinguish whether they are going to get an 'A' or a 'B'. And then for those exceptional students, of whom there may only be three or four in the whole year group, I would perhaps go to an 'A\*' if they did something which was really really...stylish.

**Oscar** In that lesson they...you taped them, they taped themselves when they were playing. How do you use this tape, or what's the purpose?

**Elaine (36)** All their work is recorded on that tape right from September, and we play it back in the next lesson, and they will grade themselves according to the scheme that was on the board, and then I'll say what I've given them, and then we'll see if the two things match.

**Oscar** Is that...all pupils grade themselves, or...?

**Elaine (37)** Yeah. I don't do it in every project, but I am going to do it with this project. To let them listen back and say to themselves 'was my solo syncopated?', 'did my second solo have call and response?', 'did I play the chords accurately?', 'does it sound OK?', 'what could I do to improve it?'... It's a kind of evaluation that they take part in and I also discuss with them.

**Oscar** And do they give marks to their mates?

**Elaine (38)** No. They just do their own...Well, in the past I've done that, but you get a bit of, you know, them giving low marks to people they don't like [laugh]. So, I just get them to focus on their own one when it comes up on the tape, but also to listen to the other people's work, as well.

**Oscar** Mm...this is a long question, I need to read it...During my preliminary visit to your school when we chose to videotape the Blues unit, you asked me if did it matter for my study that highly structured composing activities could well be inhibiting pupils' creativity. My answer was, no it doesn't matter for the study, as long as you are aware of it, and you can point it out in the interview. That was the first preliminary visit...

**Elaine (39)** All right...

**Oscar** Would you explain further your original question?

**Elaine (40)** Mm...it's what I hinted at before, in that, when you teach composition, for example in Year 7 - Year sevens have to make up a little tune which has got an ABAC structure, just a melody, no chords - and in order for it to sound...well...OK, in order for it to sound like a proper melody, very often you know and I know that the note might come back to the tonic at the end of the piece, just to...and there's, that sense of cadence. And some children don't discover that for themselves, so they would end on say the leading note, so the piece sounds completely unfinished, and as though it's abruptly stopped. So by saying



to them something like, 'if you come back to this note your piece will sound finished off, and more complete', it's the same thing, you are sort of teaching a tradition...

**Oscar** ...and style...

**Elaine (41)** ...and style. And in doing so, you are, you know, sort of intervening in a way that makes the tune sound better, but at the same time you want them to be able to hear that it sounds better. So, in other words, you don't just accept...well, I don't just accept their ideas, at face value, I try to intervene. And I don't know if that's right or not...?

**Oscar** Me neither...[laugh]

**Elaine (42)** The thing is that if you don't, some of them will produce pieces of music that when you play them back on the tape, others will laugh at, because they can recognise that it doesn't sound right. They may not be able to know why, but they have enough sort of musical 'know-how' to know, to recognise something sounds wrong. I think that's quite a dilemma for a teacher.

**Oscar** Let's watch the last one. In this last one there are...four bits by different pupils, and after the extract, I'll ask you to comment on each of these four. Is that OK?

**Elaine (43)** Yes.

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: This extract is also taken from the last lesson of the unit. Four tunes played by different pupils are included here. The pupils record their performances at the same time, going around the main classroom and some practice rooms with a microphone and a big tape recorder. The class runs out of time and some of the pupils, including the last pair of boys playing in the extract, record their tune after the end of the lesson.*

**Oscar** Any comments, please?

**Elaine (44)** Well, I think you saw quite a range of outcomes to the project. The first two, Ellie, did much better when she changed to guitar, which is her instrument rather than keyboard. The second girl, Laura, I thought that was a really good piece of work, that would be an 'A', easily. The third girl, who was also called Laura, I saw her parents at parents evening that week, and apparently she had been in tears on the morning of the music lesson, because she was worried about playing her piece in front of everybody, and although she didn't manage to play the actual melody accurately, she's just started to get some of the syncopation and improvisation, so I was pleased that she did actually do it. The two boys at the end, I felt they had some understanding of call and response and syncopation, they'd obviously been using some black notes in the syncopated solo, because there were some funny sounds going on there, but they'd worked quite well as a pair and completed the task. Well! I felt...I felt they'd all done quite well.

**Oscar** Would you have selected any different extracts from the lessons, maybe, to make comments?

**Elaine (45)** Mm...on the...just on the last lesson, or overall?

**Oscar** Overall.

**Elaine (46)** Well, you've left out some students who didn't make much head-way with the work - Tony D. who is a Stage 3 special needs, I think he only actually manage to do the chords for the whole of the project. And...[pause thinking]... apart from leaving out the ones that didn't do particularly well [laugh], no. There's quite a range within that, I think.

**Oscar** The last tune of this extract was videotaped in a practice room, without your presence, and the pupils seemed to have fun recording it with a microphone, and it was done after the end of the lesson, within break-time. I wonder if they would do the same for a maths project, but...anyway. How do you motivate your pupils when working with music composition and improvisation activities?

**Elaine (47)** I think, sometimes...well most students enjoy music at the school, and they like using the keyboards, because it gives them sophisticated sounds, and with a project like that, you know, that's a piece of work that they have been developing over a number of weeks, and usually, most of them like to complete it and, you know, feel quite proud of what they've done. They know that they have to have an assessment every half-term, and that it's got to be done. So that, you know, often I say 'can you stay behind' and they never seem to mind to do that, most of them. So, I don't know, I think they just enjoy it.

**Oscar** Do you practice any other activities to work with composition and improvisation activities, apart from this Blues unit?

**Elaine (48)** Yeah. The first unit of Year 9 is an original composition that they do, where they have to make up their own chord sequence and develop a melody. The second unit is all performance. The third unit is based on improvisation using modes, and it's in a very different style to that one...

**Oscar** That would have been interesting to videotape...

**Elaine (49)** That was just the half term before you came. I was using, you know the tune from 'Left-tenant K.J.' [singing A E D C B A G A B C B A E...]: dadadarara... It uses that tune, and then they have to develop a middle section which is improvised. So it's a bit of performing and improvising.

**Oscar** Do you feel confident with these kind of activities?

**Elaine (50)** Pretty much.

**Oscar** This is a tricky one... How do you view the National Curriculum for music and its attainment targets, including those related with composing and improvising?

**Elaine (51)** Well, the...there is only one attainment target now, isn't there? That's the music one, and then the levels that are now applied. They are very difficult to work with. There is no standardisation between schools, and they mean nothing at all to the students, because the language is so dense, so... I don't feel constrained by it, though, by the National Curriculum.

**Oscar** Right. Could you summarise the kinds of music activities going on in the school and the aims of these activities, in and out the regular timetable?

**Elaine (52)** Well, the activities going on within the timetable, based on National Curriculum Programmes of Study, performing-listening-composing, group work, individual work, singing, listening, writing, research, lots of different activities based around half-term units. Outside of the timetable there is a variety of groups. Some groups require students to

have instrumental skills, such as the string group or guitar group. Other groups, such as the junk band and the choir is open to anybody, at all, and there is a lot of informal music making which goes on, that the students just organise themselves, so...you know, rock groups, and even a little group of girls from that lesson, sometimes get together and do things in their own time, that are nothing to do with me, they just get pop songs and things like that together. And the purpose, really, is for those who are instrumentalists, to work in a different kind of musical tradition, you know, playing in ensembles and playing at a level that they have reached on their instruments. It's very much, I suppose, performance based outside the curriculum, apart from the junk band - where the junk band actually compose and perform their own stuff.

**Oscar** Are you in charge of the junk band?

**Elaine (53)** No, [another teacher] does the junk band. So, outside the curriculum, it is mainly performance, and then, inside the curriculum there is the composition element as well, and the improvisation.

**Oscar** The first day I came to the school I saw - I think - a rock band. But they were older, maybe...

**Elaine (54)** Year 11?

**Oscar** Yeah, GCSEs.

**Elaine (55)** Yes.

**Oscar** Do they do more musical things outside the school curriculum when they grow older, or...?

**Elaine (56)** It's hard to generalise. One particular rock band, it's very active, plays in [a city], plays around here, has done CDs but also rehearses at school. And then there are groups lower down there is a Year 9 rock band, and there is a folk, well like a fusion band - is got an electric violin in it, as well. And really, whatever their interests are, I try to encourage them just to follow what they are interested in. And at least, outside of the curriculum there is a freedom to do that, which isn't always there in the lesson.

**Oscar** How many pupils have you got this year in GCSE?

**Elaine (57)** In which year? Year 10 and Year 11...?

**Oscar** Yeah...well taking the exam?

**Elaine (58)** Taking the exam there's a hundred. That would be fifty in Year 11, and then there's fifty in Year 10.

**Oscar** Quite a lot!

**Elaine (59)** It is a lot. Yes.

**Oscar** Because, you had, how many Year nines?

**Elaine (60)** In the whole year group, there is about two hundred and forty. I think, in the whole year group.

- Oscar** So, quite a lot of them, choose to do GCSE.
- Elaine (61)** About, yes, about 25...no in fact 26 per cent, according to OFSTED. Twenty six per cent do GCSE.
- Oscar** Oh yes, you had a successful inspection... Three weeks ago, or a month ago?
- Elaine (62)** Is it that long ago? Oh, yeah...horrible experience.
- Oscar** Do you know the results?
- Elaine (63)** Well, the Music Department did very well. I don't know about the school overall.
- Oscar** Did they give you feed-back, right after the...?
- Elaine (64)** Yes, yes, they gave feed-back. Yeah, that was good.
- Oscar** OK. Thanks very much for you time. Would you like to add anything else?
- Elaine (65)** No. Probably when I've thought about it at home I'll think 'oh, I should have said that' or 'I could have said that' but just off the top of my head, no, I can't think of anything at the moment.
- Oscar** Are you happy with the school resources, instruments, rooms...?
- Elaine (66)** Yeah, yes. Compared to some schools, I think we are very fortunate. And we are also fortunate in having a senior management team and a Head teacher who is very, very supportive. Anything I've wanted to do, in terms of musical development, he's always said 'yes do'. And that makes a big difference, because I have worked in a school where as long as the concerts were good, the Head didn't really mind what was going on in the lessons. So, I think, you know, it's a nice school to work in.
- Oscar** How long have you been teaching in this school?
- Elaine (67)** Mm...since nineteen... ninety-four.
- Oscar** Did you teach in other schools before?
- Elaine (68)** I taught in [a town], I taught in a boys school in [a city], and taught in a school in [another county]...yes.
- Oscar** OK.
- Elaine (69)** OK?
- Oscar** Thanks very much.
- Elaine (70)** That's all right.

[End of recording]

## INTERVIEW WITH SARAH

*Context and description of the first video extract: This extract is taken from the middle of a unit in Blues composition with a Year 8 group. It is the beginning of the lesson and Sarah explains the tasks for today's session. Sarah tells the pupils that their Blues tunes are to be recorded on tape the following week. There will be a competition based on the recorded tunes of the students - at the end of the unit, Sarah will randomly record the tunes onto a tape that will be marked by the pupils.*

**Oscar** Could you describe what you were doing in this part of the lesson?

**Sarah (1)** In this part of the lesson, basically consolidating the knowledge that they gained previously and reminding them of what it was they had been working on, especially as they had missed a week. So, to try and reinforce that, and to set out the premises for the lesson. And to sort of let them in on what, you know, what the targets were basically, for the lesson.

**Oscar** Right. Can you describe what the 'Year 8 Blues Competition' is?

**Sarah (2)** It's basically an inter-form competition, because they are taught in form groups, where by each class is given a basic twelve-bar Blues walking bass pattern to learn, and they learn to perform that, and there are five stages of difficulty, four stages of difficulty for performing that, to do with keyboard technique. They are then encouraged to compose Blues tunes, and then it's then performed as a class rondo, where they all play the main Blues tune together, then we go to a solo, and then play the main Blues tune and then go to a solo, and depending on how many times, how many solos they choose to put in, as a class. And they, then, spend some time recording. The best takes, the best take from each class is then put on a compilation tape, played to all the classes within the year, and using the marking criteria for what they are actually trying to do, they mark each other's work, I don't mark it. And then they decide for themselves which piece they think is the most successful.

**Oscar** When they listen to this tape, do they know who's playing?

**Sarah (3)** No, because, when they record in the lesson, they would say their class name, along with which take it is. But, when I take the excerpts off, say for example, the first class would...think that take two is the best take, the next class think take three, I've actually removed the announcements, so they are only marking the work and not anything to do with the people in the class.

**Oscar** And when...in the final assessment of the pupils' tunes, do you give them the same marks they award themselves? Do you have the last say, the last...?

**Sarah (4)** In terms of who gets the best recording kind of prize, no, because it's purely done to their judgement. But, obviously, I'm talking to them about, or discussing what makes a good performance work, things they should've got right as bare minimum and what things make it more or less exciting as performance, so... The work, the actual outcome, is decided on by the pupils, but only in this unit, it's unique. So, I don't award them individual grades, that they fed back, I mean obviously I make notes on who's created solos and been successful and that kind of thing, and who's, you know, how they cope with the work, but not specifically for grading that they get back. It's team work, the emphasis is team work.

**Oscar** Could you explain what you have been doing with these pupils, after that lesson I taped?

**Sarah (5)** Right. After the lesson you taped they went on to audition if you like the solos, and they then decided which solos they were going to have in as a class, in what order they were gonna be put, you know, bear in mind that the main tune comes back, I taught them a C7 tremolo chord to put on the end, and they worked out ways of starting and finishing their piece accurately, because when it came to the final recording the only role I play in it was to be the recording person, the sound recorder. I didn't count them in, I didn't show how to start or stop. They had to do it everything sort of internally within the group. And so, they went onto decide on how exactly they were gonna present their piece, exploring timbres on the keyboard, and what they liked and sounds, and problem solving, things like that.

**Oscar** Do they choose their instruments?

**Sarah (6)** Yes. They, while working with the keyboards, they were asked to consider whether they wanted everyone in the class on the same voice, or whether they wanted to split it, or how they wanted to do it...like that.

**Oscar** So, could you try to summarise the lesson plan for this unit?

**Sarah (7)** For this particular individual lesson or the whole...?

**Oscar** No, no, the whole unit.

**Sarah (8)** The whole unit, mm... To introduce them to the concept of Blues as a style, to explain to them the kind of technical workings of that, in terms of harmony, and form, and to engage them with keyboard technique, to encourage them to improvise and compose within the harmonic framework, and do a successful ensemble form - it's actually listening to each other, and coming across things which you do when you perform the music, keeping steady tempo, and sensitivity to others, balance, pressures of being a soloist, that kind of stuff, but within the Blues framework. And to set it up as an inter-form competition it gives them a bit of...more incentive on the team work side because they are then comparing the work they've done with the work of other classes, and they can hear very easily how successful the team work element has been.

**Oscar** Do you consider the unit...you work in composition work, or improvisation? How do you see this, the things they do...?

**Sarah (9)** There is, yeah, there is an element of both. The compositions, as in the solos, are generated just from, you know, from improvisation. But then are learned, and generally aren't improvised in the final recording, the children will practice them and memorise them, and internalise so they are the same every time they have an idea...they don't generally improvise on the day, they actually, they perform what they've composed. Although the improvisation comes very well in the unit when they are actually trying to formulate the compositions.

**Oscar** When you teach improvisation and composition, do you consider any specific classroom setting?

**Sarah (10)** Mm...well, you're kind of working within the constraints of the physical environment anyway. So, in order to actually be able to facilitate the number of children I've got with...you know be able to engage with instruments then, I use the set up that you saw, on video. That's basically how I can get them all in and working. I can spread them out into other areas, but for this particular unit, it seems much more easy to have them all together.

because they need to be aware of this team work thing. So, it's not an opportunity where they can do their own thing, really.

**Oscar** Do you think that the physical environment influences pupils' outcome, what they do?

**Sarah (11)** I think yeah, I think it does. I think...obviously you can take that on different levels, but for example to have, you know, examples of work around the place it's just a kind of a visual...visual stimulus, as well as make the room comfortable and exciting. I mean that's sort of going on that. I think the way they sat is not necessarily conducive to get teamwork, but again...

[I stop the interview for two minutes. It's break time and some students ask to come in the room to take their bags]

**Oscar** I think it's working now [the tape-recorder]...

**Sarah (12)** Yes, so it does have an influence. And also how the pupils see the environment, whether they think it's, you know, attractive, and stimulating, and those kinds of things, will have an effect because it's largely dependant upon the state of surroundings, the success which they are able to achieve in the classroom.

**Oscar** By 'physical environment' I mean as well availability of instruments and...and space, rooms, and a bit of everything.

**Sarah (13)** Right. Availability of instruments isn't a problem in terms of this project, because we look at what we have. But yes, obviously if we didn't have enough equipment for everybody to be able to access the instruments, then that would have an effect on the quality of the work, or, you know, the levels of participation, and we would have to find other ways of engaging everybody in what we were doing, but...Yes, so to have, you know, adequate facilities for what you are trying to do, is obviously important.

**Oscar** Right. I think we could watch the next one.

*Context and description of the second video extract: This extract is taken from the same Blues unit, now with a different Year 8 group. We see the end of a whole-group performance of the Blues tunes given by Sarah. She then explains the next task, the composition of a Blues tune for their solo. She advises pupils on which notes to use depending on the chords that are played. Afterwards the pupils are given ten minutes to experiment with their own tunes.*

**Oscar** What is your immediate response to this extract?

**Sarah (14)** Mm...multi-levelled. Just looking at it from different perspectives really. I suppose, I felt that I needed to explain it very carefully, but...there are children in that class who don't sit well and listen well, they find it very difficult to concentrate, and I suppose if you are looking at preferred modes of learning, there are some children who learn a lot better by actually getting on with it, rather than listening to somebody tell them how to do it. But, over the time I've been doing it, I found it much easier, I get better results if I actually do it, if I demonstrate it first. I think that...they were kind of itching to join in at each stage, and they wanted to have a go at that bit there and then, as I was talking through it, rather than waiting, but... I think, it was clear, in terms of task. But...yeah.

**Oscar** [Laugh] Mm...more or less, in that part of the lesson, could you describe what were you doing, in this bit we've seen?

**Sarah (15)** I was trying to move them from playing the melody as I'd given them, as a pattern, as a set sort of pattern, into experimenting with notes and rhythms, within the framework. So it was clear, but...to actually try and make something which was identifiably theirs rather than identifiably what I'd given them.

**Oscar** When you teach how to compose or you advise how to get there, do you follow some process, or processes?

**Sarah (16)** What, specific compositional processes? Or pedagogical...?

**Oscar** Yeah...in general. You said here 'you could use these three notes with this chord and...'

**Sarah (17)** That is just cut it down to three, because having taught the lesson previously, and in different ways, I was trying to find ways of simplifying it, so that those pupils who were struggling to come to terms with what I was asking them to do, could find a way in that was a bit easier. But that's by...you kind of discover those things by, yeah, you think it through in terms of new classes and the individuals within it, but sometimes you modify as you find what works and what doesn't. So, I'm just trying to find a way in which I can engage everybody and then I can move on those who particularly take to whatever activity, and there'll be different kids for different activities.

**Oscar** Would you try to describe your role as a teacher, with the pupils and their improvisations?

**Sarah (18)** Mm...

**Oscar** Not only in this unit, I mean...

**Sarah (19)** Generally?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Sarah (20)** I suppose as a kind of facilitator, as someone who can provide them with experience and advice as to how for them to get what they want from the music, because often they kind of know what they want it to sound like, but they find it very difficult to actually make it sound like that. So if they strive for the high, very high standards in terms of the commercial music that they're used to, and they want to be able to do it to that kind of standard, but they don't necessarily have the knowledge of compositional techniques and compositional processes, or to be able to un-pick it for themselves, to find out how that works; sometimes they might stumble upon it through improvisation, or whatever. But, so as a teacher, you are there to kind of provide the building blocks I suppose in terms of techniques, and to offer advice and guidance and maybe ideas about where to take things. But I suppose that has implications in terms of working within conventions, and things like that, and if you mark, you are modifying pupils' work, you are actually taking away some of their creativity, because you are inherently working within norms. I think there's a lot to think about...

**Oscar** Right. Actually...let's watch the next one.



*Context and description of the third video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson as the second extract. It contains three shorter extracts. At the beginning we see a pair of pupils trying out their own tune on the keyboard. They experiment with different melodies following the Blues structure and the beat-pattern of the keyboard. After some practising and experimenting they are offered some advice by Sarah, who is going around the class observing and talking with the students. At the end of the lesson this pair of pupils perform their tune, now with the composed solo part almost finished, in front of their classmates.*

**Oscar** In this extract I cut a bit from the beginning and middle section of the lesson, and a bit of the end there. Can you explain the processes that pupils go through, until they have completed the final piece?

**Sarah (21)** The final piece in terms of...?

**Oscar** Well the final two [I point at the TV screen].

**Sarah (22)** Oh, just specifically for creating that? That bit there?

**Oscar** Yeah.

**Sarah (23)** I suppose the principle thing they're doing is experimenting, and using their musical experiences, and their musical competences to find ways in which they can kind of synthesise what I've asked them to do with what their expectations of themselves and what their experiences are. So, it's kind of... it's broadening in a sense. But they're having to listen and problem-solve and... I suppose, to some extent, it just kind of happens, when you are improvising, you just...they're actually playing and they'll stumble across something they like and they'll hold on to it, in the terms of one may play things, and one or the other may say 'well, I think that doesn't work'. That's the kind of negotiation...that kind of thing.

**Oscar** Here they work in pairs. Are all of them working in pairs, in the other Year 8s?

**Sarah (24)** For this particular project yes. Not obviously across the whole curriculum at all times, but specifically in this set up, yes.

**Oscar** Is the process of composing their tunes different, between the pupils?

**Sarah (25)** I think it can be. I think it depends on, as I said, preferred modes of learning and how children engage with music. And also, to what...to what extent there is understanding and experience, so they...they will be successful, I mean if you take it to...if you take it down to a sort of basic level, you take into account like Swanwick's spiral, depending on where they are on that, will depend on what kind of intellectual music level they are engaged in, with the sound they are making, and their understanding of those sounds, so therefore, that would have a part to play, as well as, as I say, other psychological factors going on.

**Oscar** Right. What is your definition of creativity?

**Sarah (26)** Mm...confused (laughs). I suppose my definition of creativity would include...I suppose it implies 'personal originality'. Because something for a particular individual may be highly creative, in that it is unique and a new experience for them, but within a wider social context might not be innovative. I suppose creativity for me does imply

innovation but not necessarily beyond the individual, because...it may be completely new for them, they may have played something that is feasible, but they could play something which is already, say commercially composed, but they may never have come across that. So for them, it is in one sense creative, although it may not be perceived as creativity. I think there is a great deal to do with kind of referentialism, and norms, and conventions. Because, I suppose, creativity at its kind of ultimate level, would challenge boundaries, but within examination systems, external examination, we are working within boundaries, because there are certain things they say you must need to, you know, they say that they want the work to be creative, if it doesn't follow certain rules, or doesn't show certain elements, they deem that not to be creative; and whether they've got those parameters right or not I don't know. I think it is to do - as in the paper you kind of gave me - I think it is about processes, it is about understanding or just kind of discovering something new. That is an element of it. But I...I feel there is confusion to do with norms and, I think that is an issue.

**Oscar** Do you think it is possible to teach to be creative?

**Sarah (27)** I think so, I think it's to do with, more than anything, it's to do with risk-taking, and just having a go and confidence, and independence. So I suppose creativity kind of implies independence as well. So, again it comes back to one's definition of creativity, but, if you are not prepared to...or you find it hard to push yourself or to experiment, then you'll never discover that, because I suppose you are trying to find something new on a personal level. So, I think it's to do with that.

**Oscar** Would you describe yourself as creative?

**Sarah (28)** I think... I can be. Mm...both musically and non-musically - in terms of if you like 'creative thinking' or innovative. But I'm not...I don't know how to what extent you are trying to tie that down to specific musical behavioural traits, so...you know, for instance if you are involved in the process of interpreting a piece, then yeah I will try to be creative but then I'm still aware of conventions and social practice, and common practice. So, I suppose in terms of thinking and some practice yes, but to what extent I don't know.

**Oscar** Did you have any training in composition in your studies?

**Sarah (29)** Not free composition if you like. Although I was in the first year to do GCSE music in this country, which introduced composition as a formal...but we weren't taught how to do it, we were just...because it was the first year really, and all the rest of it. And the specific competences of the music teacher, who didn't feel confident with that, we were just told to produce a piece of music, we were given no guidance as to how to do that. And then, throughout 'A' levels and Degree, any composition that we were asked to do was mainly pastiche, such as composing in the style of others. Although that can have an element of creativity, I suppose, it's more restrictive than...what would be deemed to be free composition, if there's such thing, I'm not quite sure there is.

**Oscar** Do you have any experience in improvisation?

**Sarah (30)** Yes. Within Jazz ensembles, I've done some.

**Oscar** What do you play in that?

**Sarah (31)** Clarinet.

**Oscar** Right.

**Sarah (32)** So, yes, I have done...some of that.

**Oscar** When you said the restrictions in the examinations, the restrictions of the convention within the examinations, do you mean the...what you are asked to achieve at the end of Key Stage 3 or...?

**Sarah (33)** That kind of thing, and when you look at GCSE criteria for composing. In order to access higher grades, they basically off the board I think they say that the ideas need to be memorable, and that they need to show development, but, that's not quite the same thing. So, it's working much more within...because a piece of music can be quite, although I would agree with the 'memorable' bit but, sometimes, I think they find hard is to develop within a piece, and it can work quite successfully within the genre or whatever as an expressive piece of music without developing, but in terms of accessing grades and national recognition of achievement it doesn't fall into place.

**Oscar** Right. Let's watch the next one...?

*Context and description of the fourth video extract: This extract is taken from the same lesson, with the same Year 8 group in the last extract. It's towards the end of the lesson and the students perform their tunes in front of their classmates. Six different pupils play their Blues tune, backed by their peers who play the harmony chords a couple of octaves lower on the same keyboard. After their performances, the students receive a round of applause and Sarah comments on them.*

**Oscar** What's your first impression of this extract?

**Sarah (34)** From what perspective?

**Oscar** Mm...anything. Are these tunes similar to the ones you have been taping last week...

**Sarah (35)** Yes...yes, they are. They are very similar. Obviously with refinement, they tended to get them much tighter, and make sure they are exactly twelve bars, and changes fit with them and stuff like that. But, you have a basically, that kind...although you've got different levels going on in terms of...how successfully they completed the task within the parameters they were given. But, yes, very similar.

**Oscar** And at the end, is everybody participating in the competition, or do they select the groups?

**Sarah (36)** Everybody plays the whole Blues tune and then they go for a solo, and then everybody comes back in again with the tune, and then they go to another solo. So, the class chooses who the soloists are going to be, and in what order those solos will happen, but everybody plays in the main Blues tune, everybody participates there. So yes, everybody takes part.

**Oscar** And in this class, you've just said that this last solo...

**Sarah (37)** ...Yeah, was the one that they used. Basically it came down to whether the children were willing to do it, had the confidence to do it, if they're playing...that pupil there, she has a musical background, she has clarinet lessons, she has a keyboard at home, she practices so, she is quite confident about playing, whereas some of them are still...confidence is one of the biggest things for them. To actually have a go, one which

would have been useful to use would have been, one you could've chosen James, who's the one from the previous extract. But he wanted to do percussion and drum for it, and as I said 'it is your project, it's up to you how do you do the class arrangement' then, you know, that's what he wanted to do. So he wanted to be in charge, and time-keep and [laugh]...that sort of thing.

**Oscar** Who was this last girl, who played the solo... They didn't...this pair didn't use any beat, they played on their own. Maybe some of the others needed a beat from the keyboard, I mean she was confident.

**Sarah (38)** Yeah.

**Oscar** Are some of your pupils more creative than others?

**Sarah (39)** Some of them are more confident, and some of them actually display it, but I think creativity is also in the mind, as well as the actual outcome. So, how you measure that I don't know. And they could have fantastic ideas, but just not the...the particular technical skills to realise them. So, I think, in terms of behaviour, in musical behaviour, you will see, obviously you are gonna see different levels going on in any situation because everyone is different. But I think measuring that is extremely hard because, it then comes...and that also comes down to having a concrete definition of creativity, which I don't think we have, so...

**Oscar** Do we?

**Sarah (40)** I don't think so.

**Oscar** Right.

**Sarah (41)** So I think that compounds a problem. But I think, because it's also to do with thinking, as well as realising, how do you measure someone's, you know, any pupil creating in different ways? So, yeah...[laugh]

**Oscar** Looking at all your pupils in Key Stage 3. Those who achieve the best marks, would you say they are more creative than those who achieve different marks?

**Sarah (42)** [Thinking] That's really difficult. I suppose...the marks they receive take into account observable skills in listening, appraising, performing, composing, whilst there's no argument for creativity in all of those - I suppose composition is the weakest link for many of them, although some of them find listening and that quite difficult...

**Oscar** The weakest link with all these high achievers, or...?

**Sarah (43)** Generally, I think, generally composition is...is weaker. And I think that stems largely from confidence, pupil perception, and self-confidence. They're very self-critical, they want it, they having ideas when performing, they have an idea of what they want it to sound like, then realise that is extremely difficult, so... Are they more creative the ones that get the highest marks?...mm...possibly. To the extent that... [The end of the A side of the tape cuts the answer]

Yes, to some extent, but I wouldn't...I wouldn't commit myself on that without knowing more about it. I think that's dangerous...Lucifer [laugh]...

**Oscar** Maybe they are creative enough to adapt to the system...

**Sarah (44)** Yes.

**Oscar** ...and get marks everywhere. Anyway, mm... During one of my visits to your school you told me the syllabus for GCSE exams is being changed. You were worried about not having enough time to teach your Years 8 and 9. Can you expand on that comment, please?

**Sarah (45)** Teaching 8 and 9?

**Oscar** Yeah, Years 8 and 9...you said 'they are changing the syllabus now and...'

**Sarah (46)** My concern is to do with the fact that because they're now specifying the content of the GCSE syllabus much more...tightly if you like. That previously, because we've known what Year 10 are going to be required to do, we can make sure that there is a lead up to that in seven, eight and nine. But particularly with nine, because we haven't known this in terms of literally specifics of content, I feel that we haven't had time to prepare them, or to cover the sort of things they may need, although in essence we are, because with the lower school exam system is based very largely on GCSE activities. But because now content is specified much more, rather than skills, or the skills are specified but we never had a specific content to work to, rather than taking music from a variety of...to include popular music, music from different cultures, classical music. Now they are actually being specific in OCR and saying 'pupils will study bhangra, will study salsa, will study nineteenth century madrigals, will study Elizabethan pavane and galliard...we have not had that kind of level of specification before. And therefore, although we've taught a largely skills-based curriculum in the lower school - which enables pupils to then develop their skills more independently in Key Stage 4 - having all this content now to cover, it would be useful to wave some of that into Key Stage 3, so that there's an element of revision, an element of familiarity, and familiarity breeds confidence, which is what we need in Key Stage 4. So, that was my concern really... [A very noisy bell interrupts our conversation!] End of school.

**Oscar** Right. How many of these Year 8 and 9s are going to choose GCSE in the school?

**Sarah (47)** About fifteen a year.

**Oscar** Fifteen.

**Sarah (48)** Aha.

**Oscar** So is it...what's the percentage?

**Sarah (49)** Oh...it's...there's about two hundred children in each year group, so it's not high. It's not quite ten percent, is it?...eight percent. One of the reasons for that is that when a few years ago we used to have a system where they had to choose an arts subject, had to choose a humanities. Now they don't, they have a complete free choice in Key Stage 4, so if they want to take two...they only, they can only take two subjects, because everything else is specified for them. Because they have to do a technology, they have to do RE, and things like that. So they basically have to choose two from art, drama, music, geography, history, RE, media studies, information technology, and...there is a big long list, then they...they can only choose two, and inevitably, when you give them that much free choice... So that has definitely had an impact. And it's perceived to be a difficult subject, as well.

**Oscar** Really, because of you?

**Sarah (50)** No, because...well, maybe [laughs]. But in terms of level of challenge of it, it seems to be hard.

**Oscar** Right. Yeah the exams...

**Sarah (51)** The GCSE music exams, and because it's quite unique in terms of the demands, which are very specific musical demands, not...I think that they enjoy music-making but, they either lack the confidence, or they kind of want to keep it for them, they don't want to analyse it, they don't want to have the... do you understand? They don't want the formality of it, they just want it for enjoyment. And they'll still come up and perform and play and take part in things, and do shows and things, but they don't want to necessarily go down the formal path of it.

[I stop the interview for five minutes as pupils come into the room to get some musical instruments and bags. When they are gone, we watch the last video extract. I explain to Sarah the content of the last extract beforehand, and I told her I would like her to comment upon her pupils' performances. She writes down some notes while watching the video.]

*Context and description of the fifth video extract: This extract is taken from the same Blues project, with a different Year 8 group. Sarah explains the last task of the lesson is to play the Blues tunes in front of their classmates. Four different pupils play their own tunes in this extract. At the beginning, one pupil does not want to play, and he is given a second chance later on. At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives some instructions for the following week - she wants them to be prepared to record their tunes on tape during the next lesson.*

**Oscar** Any comments, please?

**Sarah (52)** OK. The first one I would say that he's very confident, he's very independent, because he came up with a chord sequence that he liked, it was kind of a kin to what I'd given them in terms of blue series, but he was confident to stick to what he'd done, and to him it sounded right and therefore he played that. So, that independence could be seen as an element of creativity. But obviously technique was quite secure, and the confidence was there, and therefore, I think I'm beginning to think that that's something which is kind of...certainly quintessential for showing creativity, if not for it actually existing. And so, yeah, I think his confidence goes beyond...the need to stick within the pattern that he was given.

**Oscar** Right. The next one...[laugh]?

**Sarah (53)** Mm... Are you talking about the one who didn't want to, or are you talking about the girl who did play two bars?

**Oscar** Yeah...that was the end. Maybe you want to say something about the end of that too, but, I was trying to focus on Alex, after that, I think it was Alex's mate, and two more.

**Sarah (54)** So, you want to focus on the boy?

**Oscar** Yeah. Yes, but if you have something to say...

**Sarah (55)** Yeah, just that...it kind of backed something, and I'll say it just now because, Josh didn't have the confidence to have a go, he was very very frightened by it, and the thought of having to do that for another pupil but, you know, Alex is right in there and

say 'look I'll help you' and has enough musical confidence to feel that he can help him, so that kind of backs up that. The girl who played the two bars was quite under confident, she's got quite a strong personality, and she is very interested in music, but she likes to take her time to kind of let things sink in and I think there are sort of temporal constraints of the lesson, but she actually did, as far as she got with it, was absolutely fine, it was within...well within the limit of what they've been asked to do. So, do you want a comment on what Josh eventually did there?

**Oscar** Yes, please.

**Sarah (56)** Mm...I think Alex kind of unlocked his confidence. He said 'you can do it'. I mean, obviously what he did was to play three chords, three triad descending pattern in broken triads, in time with the backing, which, OK specifically wasn't what I'd asked them to do, but at least he was...once you've got something you can refine it, if you haven't got anything, you can't refine anything. So, whilst it wasn't specifically what I'd asked them to do, the fact that he'd actually done something was an achievement, specially as he'd actually point-blank refused to do it before.

**Oscar** It was a change, because first he said 'no I can't play. I don't want to play!', and I think it was maybe ten, five or ten minutes - somebody else played between Alex and the girl, because I cut and pasted but...it was maybe ten minutes - and he did something...quite good I think.

**Sarah (57)** It's confidence, it's...and risk-taking. Prepare to have a go, prepare for it to go wrong, prepare for it not to be as good as you want it to be, but actually showing this kind of internal thing, I think. The girl who played used three notes all the way through, the same three notes. And in a kind of sort of pop rhythm. But again she is very musically confident, she is a very good singer, she's had violin lessons, and she's very very bubbly and quite, you know, a strong character within the class, and therefore...the fact that she just stuck to that all the way through it made it work, I thought it was excellent. Because it wasn't specifically again...are they being creative in a kind of bending the premises of whatever? But, yeah, I thought that musically it worked really really well, and I really like what she'd done with it, so I was very pleased with that. That was good. And again, the last girl who played was very confident. Not arrogantly so, but, it's more...I suppose, she is quite self-assured...

**Oscar** Sorry...?

**Sarah (58)** She is quite self-assured.

**Oscar** Right.

**Sarah (59)** And she basically played eight bars of C, but again, what she played within that was absolutely fine, was well within what she'd been asked to do. Conceptually hadn't grasp the kind of tempo four-bar thing, but again I don't see that as a problem because what they are actually doing is creating music. Mm...so, I again, I was pleased with that because it was musically played and, you know, played with some assurance, a kind of belief in what she was doing, I suppose that's what comes across when they are performing more confidently, that the music is in some way meaningful to them, in terms of ownership, in terms of...they feel they've actually achieved something and they are happy with it.

**Oscar** Were some of these chosen by the class to perform in the competition?

**Sarah (60)** In the final recording for that class, the only one, the only person who did one was Alex. And he actually modified his...that kind of chordal pattern to fit within the set sequence, that sort of thing. So he actually modified it, the others didn't.

**Oscar** Would you have selected any different extracts from these lessons?

**Sarah (61)** Mm... No because I think, well I mean, if you are looking to show a range of response, then that, you've certainly shown that. Everything from 'can't do it' through to 'can do it on first and jumping up and down at my sit to show you what I've done'. Also in terms of successive, you know, working within parameters, working without outside, you know, getting it and actually working within that, not really getting it, and then people who did get it but have chosen to go off in a slightly different way. So I suppose you are showing a range of response to what was a fairly specific task. Mm...in terms of choosing different extracts, I suppose, those demonstrated the range there.

**Oscar** Would you say some of those students were more creative than others?

**Sarah (62)** If I knew what creative was, then I'd be able to answer. But I'm not, because I can see kind of where your research is going and the ideas that you are bringing into that, and what I don't want to do is to fall into a trap of a kind of assumptive response. So, I think if we...I can say that some of them were more successful than others at achieving the task set, some of them were...the ones that were more successful were more confident and self-assured about what they were doing, and...there was obviously some of them stuck to very simple rhythms and some were more...they used more complex rhythms, and certainly traditionally that would have been seen to have been, and I suppose it is in a sense, it's showing, but it maybe it's showing more experience rather than creativity. It's utilising experience, and to what extent utilising experience is creativity I'm not sure. And, again, if creativity is something to do with an individual's, you know, something happening to the individual, in terms of them discovering something new for themselves, then that is more difficult to measure. So yes, they probably were, but I don't feel that committed myself and say 'I know the answer to that question', so no.

**Oscar** Maybe all of them were a bit, in their own way, creative...

**Sarah (63)** Exactly, that's all. I think creativity is a very...I think I'm coming round to the idea that creativity is a very individual thing. But I think that I'm probably still missing a point somewhere, I'm not sure [laugh]. I think there's a lot I don't know.

**Oscar** How do you view the National Curriculum and its attainment targets, including those related with composing and improvising?

**Sarah (64)** Mm...in terms of creativity?

**Oscar** Yeah. They use the word, this word sometimes. In Key Stage three, for example, a third of the curriculum is in composing skills: 'pupils should be taught how to improvise and create...' How do you view the National Curriculum?

**Sarah (65)** Mm...I think the revised form, that I'm working with is better. I think it's more skills-based, which I think it should be, and if creativity is a skill, then there is certainly, plenty of scope for it within the National Curriculum, but...I mean obviously, it specifies certain things about what pupils should be taught how to do and... things like that. But, largely, it is down to the teachers to actually facilitate that in the classroom. Because I think it is used in a very vague way, in a very undefined way. So, I think it's still down to the teacher and knowing your children, and knowing your music to do that. I mean it's certainly



sets a scope for it, but I think, I think philosophically and to some extent musicologically the National Curriculum is unclear and confused, and I think this is one of the areas in which it is. It'll still come down to interpretation, interpretation by individual teachers, interpretation by people assessing, OFSET, whatever, so...

**Oscar** Right. Apart of what we have seen in this unit, what other activities do you practice to attain the objectives on creating and developing musical ideas?

**Sarah (66)** What, in Key Stage 3?

**Oscar** Yes.

**Sarah (67)** Well, every...most units of work in Key Stage 3 try to, are kind of multi-disciplined where the three related activities are explored within whatever skill or particular genre that we are teaching and they are learning in. Because I think, their learning is at the heart of what we do in that is a shift in focus maybe from five years ago, which is all about teaching skills. I think now it's about learning skills and cognitive skills, and actually getting inside HOW they learn. It's not about...it is about teaching, but it's teaching for learning, it's putting learning at the heart of what happens in the classroom, as the most fundamentally important thing, not the teaching, that happens. The teaching itself is a tool to facilitate the learning. So, mm...taking from that perspective, we'll cover a variety of topics, say for instance in Year 7, when they walk in, we'll do a composing project with them basically to see where they are, and how, you know, before they have any kind of assumptions about the school or anything like that, they...we let them sort of loose on it a bit, and see what they actually come up with, and it's good way of kind of discovery levels...

**Oscar** You check them out.

**Sarah (68)** We try to check them out. Giving them as free reign as we kind of possibly can. Year 9s undertake Christmas song writing and a film music composition work. Year 8s...there's quite a lot of composing in eight. There's graphic notation and soundscapes, Blues music, and music in advertising, in Year 8. But, you know, for instance in advertising we do all kinds of work. There will be some...they'll be listening to work attached to that, they'll be performing work attached to that and they'll composing work attached to that, so, it's kind of, you know... And I think that's very much where GCSE is gone now. With the new specifications, in that they are prescribing the kind of topics, and the children have to be able to kind of compose, perform, and appraise in different styles, so...

**Oscar** Do you feel confident with all these kinds of activities?

**Sarah (69)** Yes. I feel confident in, as I say, trying to help pupils learn to develop independence, which is basically where they are going, because the more independent you are then, the more self-confidence and the ability to actually think, think through it yourself and find answers, and this kind of thing. So, I feel confident being...helping them to achieve that, yeah...I think.

**Oscar** This looks like a big question: Would you try to summarise your school music curriculum at Key Stage 3?

**Sarah (70)** From what perspective?

**Oscar** When you plan the school curriculum for Key Stage 3, what do you focus the music activities around - in one minute [laugh]?

**Sarah (71)** Skills...I think. With a practical base, engaging with music rather than with theory. Or, you know, theory as a means of supporting, but certainly to have the children...in most lessons they sing in Key Stage 3. Trying to get them to develop independence. Trying to...encourage a love of music in whatever style in whatever...trying to encourage a kind of open-minded approach whereas the things aren't their particular flavour they still have the skills to kind of appreciate it and understand it, through its own sets of conventions. But very much with the emphasis on doing and engaging with, rather than appreciation, I think. It's got to be...all the pupils do learn like that but, experiential learning. Because research says that if you don't practice something, then you don't improve in it, so it's no good kind of dipping in. It's got to be consistent, it's got to be ongoing, I think.

**Oscar** And would you try to summarise the kinds and aims of the music activities going on in the school outside the regular timetable?

**Sarah (72)** Mm... Primarily they are there, so that pupils can develop their own personal interests, and their own skills within, they are there as facilitators of they... for certain things they need. So if they are looking for a career as a performer, they need the specific training in. For instance, you know the lessons that go on after school, there's an interest in singing, and to take part on the choir, to...I suppose the extra curriculum is seen as enrichment, and providing opportunities for development, and more varied activities...but, very much it should support what's going on in the lessons, so the children who learn outside the curriculum, use their skills in the lessons. That is not exclusive in any way, it's not, the children don't pay for their lessons here. So the only barrier to their learning is them and their enthusiasm and their commitment to music. And saying, you know, whenever, if you do anything we'll support it financially. So, it's about genuine enthusiasm, developing a love for music itself, which hopefully we do in the classroom as well, but it's seen as a support thing, it's not seen as a kind of exclusive 'this is for the best', because there are no barriers like that, there's no auditions, there's no...

**Oscar** ...No selection.

**Sarah (73)** There is no selection at all. And the other things we do, like talent shows that are held every term, again it's more about people actually getting up and having a go, and developing independence and confidence. So, it's a support mechanism for and enrichment of curriculum music, which basically the heart of what we do, it's about children learning in the classroom. I think that's really important, that's the focus.

**Oscar** Where does the funding come from, for the extra-curricular activities?

**Sarah (74)** I'm not entirely sure [laugh] but it's something whole-school, it's something that the Head sorts out, so I'm not party to that kind of...because I don't have anything to do with it, if you see what I mean.

**Oscar** What sort of extra curriculum...you said choirs...?

**Sarah (75)** Choirs, bands, instrumental lessons, there is a thing called 'band club' which is run by two former pupils who are now at college doing Performing Arts - they are rock musicians basically, they come back in and they are helping the younger ones, and training them up. So they come in and do that with them. The problem we have is to do with the physical nature of the day, which as you know is fast and that we only have two twenty minute breaks, we don't have lunch time in which we can rehearse, so we are looking at five rehearsals slots per week, instead of ten. So, that is a limiting factor on, the amount of things we are able to offer, and also the fact that all the peripatetic teaching takes place after school which generally uses the classrooms. But, you know, we have like show bands which

support productions, we'll take various groups of musicians out to feeder-schools, and also primary's. So, you know, encourage them, sometimes take them to concerts or whatever, so... Yeah, there's quite a bit going on.

**Oscar** Are you in charge of any of these groups, choirs or activities?

**Sarah (76)** Mainly choir. Although...show bands, I've done it.

**Oscar** On a weekly basis, or...?

**Sarah (77)** It depends on, yeah... The main school wind band is conducted by a peripatetic teacher, and also band club is run by two former pupils, who take responsibility.

**Oscar** Can you describe the range of instruments you can study outside school?

**Sarah (78)** Yes. Woodwinds: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, sax, any brass instruments - trombone, trumpet, euphonium, tuba; guitar teacher who comes in, we have a singing teacher, we have a teacher of cello, double bass, a teacher who teaches violin, viola and...we have a drum teacher who comes in as well. So, basically, any orchestral instrument, plus guitars, and singing, and drums.

**Oscar** All right, quite a lot.

**Sarah (79)** Yeah.

**Oscar** Are you happy with the facilities you have?

**Sarah (80)** Mm...I'd like a bigger room (laugh)...

**Oscar** Right (laugh)...

**Sarah (81)** ...basically. No, I...we would like to improve physical accommodation, but there are various reasons why they can't do that at the moment, it's to do with floor space per pupil and stuff like that, because we're within the guidelines. So ideally, yes, I'd like an arts block with specifically designed classrooms for music, because I do feel this is...although it's not onerously small, it is workable, it would be nice to have a...

**Oscar** ...A separate building?

**Sarah (82)** Yeah, it would be nice to have more space, and also, you know, probably better classroom lay out. The lay out of the classroom is to some extent dictated by the physical make up of it. Because this was created from what was a very small classroom and a very big room next door. They changed the layout from two rooms into one, so... But I think people can always find ways of...searching for improvement.

**Oscar** Would you like to add anything else?

**Sarah (83)** No, thank you. It has been an interesting experience.

**Oscar** All right [laugh]. Thanks very much for your time, and it's been a pleasure being in the school, taping and letting me do all this.

[End of recording]

# APPENDIX VI

‘Music Career Path’ sheets

## MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 1: Patrick.

When about 5-6 years old I used to play around on the piano at a neighbours' – eventually I persuaded my parents to buy a piano and I started lessons. Fluent recorder player at infant school, but I was told not to sing as I tended “to grunt rather” - I didn't really feel comfortable with singing until I started teaching myself some 15 years later!

When I was about 10 I used to teach the recorder to younger pupils at my primary school. I started the violin when I went to secondary school and after a year changed to the viola. Class music lessons at secondary school very poor, but I played in the orchestra and the wind band and performed in the regular concerts.

I joined the [County] String Training Orchestra (14 years old). Did O-level music outside of school hours - I was the only person taking it! At 15 I joined the [County] Youth Orchestra - went on a tour to New England, USA - some of my happiest musical memories; the conductor's teaching style had a great influence on me.

Studied A-level music at a specialist music course - lots of playing (especially piano accompanying) and concerts.

I studied for a music degree at [Oxbridge] - very academic course but I had an outstanding tutor who again influenced me as a teacher; lots of orchestral playing and opportunities to conduct which I really enjoyed.

After graduating I went to [an English university] to do a PGCE - I have always wanted to teach ever since I was about 6 years old! The course was excellent - introduced to many different styles of music - and I had two very contrasting but stimulating teaching practice schools. Both heads of department were very influential on my own teaching.

Started teaching in an inner-city boys school - learnt a lot, mainly about how not to run a music department!

After 18 months I went to be a head of department at a school in [a county]. Students generally difficult and the school was at the bottom of the exam league tables in the county. I learnt a lot about how to teach music by working from fundamentals and also about the importance of music as a social activity. I really enjoyed my time there.

After 4 years I came to [this school] where I am now Head of Department. I really enjoy working here and am very proud of what we have achieved over the last four years. I find my teaching very creative and stimulating and my musical skills are continually being developed and stretched.

In Sept 1999 I started an MA in music education at the [an English university] which I am finding very stimulating.

## MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 2: Emma.

I sang the solo in the Christmas carol concert at 5 years old – last verse of ‘In the bleak mid-winter’. My father was a wonderful baritone – sung oratorios. He was also a vicar so we all sang in church.

My whole family sang together with parents accompanying on guitars from the age of 6 –13. Myself and my younger brother and sister and parents sang in public folk songs or arias in harmony. I learned the piano for 3 years.

Sang in church choir for about 5 years – Head chorister. I gave up music at school at the age of 13, as I had to choose between music and art, so I chose art. Took music O’ level at night school in one year – very formal, no music making.

Went to [an East country] for 4 months - huge inspiration – dancing with my eyes closed (connection with the body through meditation, dance and music). At College joined band (singing). Wrote songs, joined another rock band and toured Europe when I was 21.

My mum gave me £2000 and I bought a 4-track tape recorder and a microphone – my songwriting career began. I wrote on my own while getting a job in a recording studio where I was quickly promoted to sound engineer – I worked f/t for 1-½ years.

During that time I joined a band (I had a four track that’s how I got in). The keyboard player had just been dropped by EMI after 6 weeks of a £150.000 record deal. I co-wrote songs with them, then met guitarist who I have been writing with for 15 years. During this time we worked f/t (masses of studios, gigs, video, etc).

I sang 4 years in a [Far-East country] nightclub. I did a f/t postgraduate Jazz course at [an English university] - trained to be a music teacher. Taught f/t for 4 years - burned out!

Got a p/t job as a Choral Animator with the British Federation of Young Choirs in [two city boroughs] running workshops with primary kids - trained with [TRAINER’s NAME]. Became involved in the Natural Voice Practitioners Network - global world music a cappella.

Ran workshops at [a prison] and started Youth Choir and primary choir in [a city borough]. Teaching at [a secondary school].

Running vocal workshops all over the country ages 7 – 90.

### MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 3: Laura.

Father was very musical. As a pianist we all sang along from as early an age as I can remember. With an Irish cultural background, music was regularly celebrated.

Church folk music and traditional church music was very influential during my childhood and adolescence, and I first began arrangements of church hymns as a teenager.

My piano teacher of 10 years has been an enormous influence.

Auditioning for Performing Arts College at 16 years opened up doors to other styles and musicians.

With a degree in Music and Drama, and composition being a strong interest, using music technology as an instrument was very exciting.

Music making with youngsters at degree level led me to work with hearing impaired children in a [city] comprehensive school and at children's camp in [an Eastern country].

Living in [a North African country] was a strong link with teaching music at a school and playing Irish folk music at a regular venue.

Returning to get the PGCE at [an English university] and ending up running a secondary music department at a [city borough] comprehensive school (still there!!).

Travelling to South Africa on a music tour with youngsters has been an eye opener. Creativity in youngsters is alive and prospering.

Starting an MA degree in Music Education keeps me on my toes.  
I dare not turn stale...

**MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 4: Helen.**

I learnt the recorder and flute at primary school in Scotland. I thoroughly enjoyed this and continued into secondary. I wrote very short tunes for the flute at this time.

I then moved to an English secondary school and the recorder playing was poor. There was no music teacher and a maths teacher led the brass band.

I began to learn the cornet and teach fellow students the recorder. I enjoyed doing this and continued through to the end of my fifth year.

I decided to take music further at college and so studied A-level. I lost a lot of confidence during this course but was using it as a stepping stone to do a degree in Music. I then applied to universities and colleges and got into [a college] of Music and Drama in [Welsh].

I specialised in the Flute and took a variety of modules, in order to keep my future choices open.

A lot of people encouraged me to go into teaching but I remained uncertain. Eventually I applied to do a PGCE and enjoyed a year of learning to teach and learning about world music. The course changed my outlook on the musical world.

I started teaching with lots of doubts as to my suitability to it but have enjoyed all aspects of the job (except the long hours).



## MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 5: Elaine.

Going to church, being in the choir and loving to sing the bass line rather than soprano.

Listening to my father, sister and brother make music and wanting to join in.

Organising a concert for a local hospice when I was 11 and realising that other children in the road couldn't sing or play what I wanted them to.

Feeling that composing allowed the essence of who I am to be exposed to the world. (Very posy – sorry!!)

Being played Beethoven's 'Cavatina' from sQ. op 130 (Bb) in an A' level class and having to go out because it made me cry!

Having a mother who insisted 'you are a born teacher!' ....although I resisted this....

Being able to be successful in music without really trying.

Went to a music school where loving music was the norm. Then realising in my final teaching job that other people had a very different reality.

Reading 'Portrait of the Artist' J. Joyce, which encouraged me to reflect on formative incidents.

## MUSICAL CAREER PATH. Participant 6: Sarah.

I was brought up in a musical environment in that there was an abundance of classical music played (recordings), along with folk music + Abba! Neither parent plays an instrument.

In Primary Education I took part in every event possible as singer. I took up recorder at the age of 5, clarinet at 9 and cello at 11. In Secondary Education [in the 1980s] I started to teach myself keyboard skills. I joined three orchestras – 2 youth and 1 adult, where I was asked to play Double Bass.

A major turning point was when I went to college at 16 on a Pre-Professional Music Course and studied Music for 28 hrs a week! I received piano lessons for the first time and played in many concerts (almost 1-2 a week). This experience cemented my commitment to music. I met some people who are still close friends and a source of inspiration. I decided on teaching as a career.

I studied for a BMus at [an English university] and continued to actively participate in as many concerts-ensembles and activities as possible. I started teaching clarinet privately. I was the final year degree recitalist. I met some fantastic musicians, two of whom are still my closest friends.

[During that time] I was a student tutor at a six-form college where I taught A level music, and at a school where I taught KS3 and KS4.

I studied for a PGCE at [an English university]. Having been in Guiding since 1979 and a youth leader in the holidays I knew that I wanted to combine my love of music with my commitment to working with young people. The course was academically stimulating (or rather my own research was) but musically, standards were lower and I found this aspect uninspiring.

[In the 1990s] I started my 1<sup>st</sup> teaching job and decided to teach myself the violin so that I was starting a new musical adventure: being a learner. My job was a constant source of inspiration. I joined a local choir.

In [the late 1990s] I started an MA at [an English university] and focussed the personal research I had been doing for 3 years. In 1999 I become the Head of Department.

I currently sing with 2 choirs and play in an orchestra on a weekly basis. I have started composing as a personal interest. I undertake occasional 'gig' work with a variety of choirs and orchestras. I take part in termly school talent shows, run extra-curricular activities at work, run an annual Y7 and Y8 school camp and practice at home.

# APPENDIX VII

Extract from the guidelines of  
Patrick's Music Department

## 6. KS3 Schemes of Work

### 6.1 Areas of Learning

These are listed for each module - each teacher in the department covers the same areas every half-term. In this way pupils are systematically taught control of and sensitivity to specific musical materials, expressive gestures and formal relationships. As outlined in Section 5.2, planning the curriculum in this way fundamentally creates opportunities for differentiation and progression. Through the activities offered, these areas of learning also provide specific elements of musical understanding that can be assessed (see Section 7).

It is important to remember, however, that every learning encounter is unique. As teachers we must be sensitive to all musical experiences, whether they have been planned for or not. The areas of learning for each module provide the starting points not the limits for any musical discourse.

### 6.2 Activities

A range of composing, performing and listening activities are suggested for each module of work. All the necessary resources for these are on file together with a tape containing all the relevant musical examples. The number of periods to be spent on each activity is also suggested. Starred periods (\*) indicate when practice rooms for group work will be allocated. A timetable for this is drawn up at the beginning of the half-term and all teachers must follow this. We all plan our lessons a half-term in advance.

As long as the specified areas of learning are covered, we encourage individual teachers (and beginning teachers) to devise new activities following their particular enthusiasms and teaching styles. These can then be shared amongst the department.

### 6.3 Repertoire

Listing the music encountered for every module ensures that we cover a broad range of musical styles and cultures. Again, individual teachers are encouraged to add to these lists.

#### 6.4 Homework/Cover Work

See Section 11.5 for our Homework Policy & Practice. By listing specific worksheets, we also ensure that meaningful and relevant cover work is available.

#### 6.5 National Curriculum Attainment Targets

These are not specifically listed for each module. When we attempted this we found that we were listing them all for every module. Through our detailed planning and by engaging in genuinely musical discourse in our lessons we are, by definition, covering all the essential components of a comprehensive musical education.

The current National Curriculum specifications for music are on the green sheets at the end of this section.

